



HORIZON

THE STRONGHOLD OF HOPE



A Sourcebook for Mage: The Ascension

HORIZON

THE STRONGHOLD OF HOPE



ACE of QUESTING.



PAGE of PATTERN.



THE MAGE.



In Unity, There is Strength

by Beth Fisch and Allen Varney,
with Ethan Skemp

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Due to mature themes and subject matter, reader discretion is advised.

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Special Dedications

For Sam Chupp, who laid the foundation for Horizon.

Chris Hind, whose name fell through the cracks on **Mage Second Edition** (Ack! I'm sorry, Chris!).

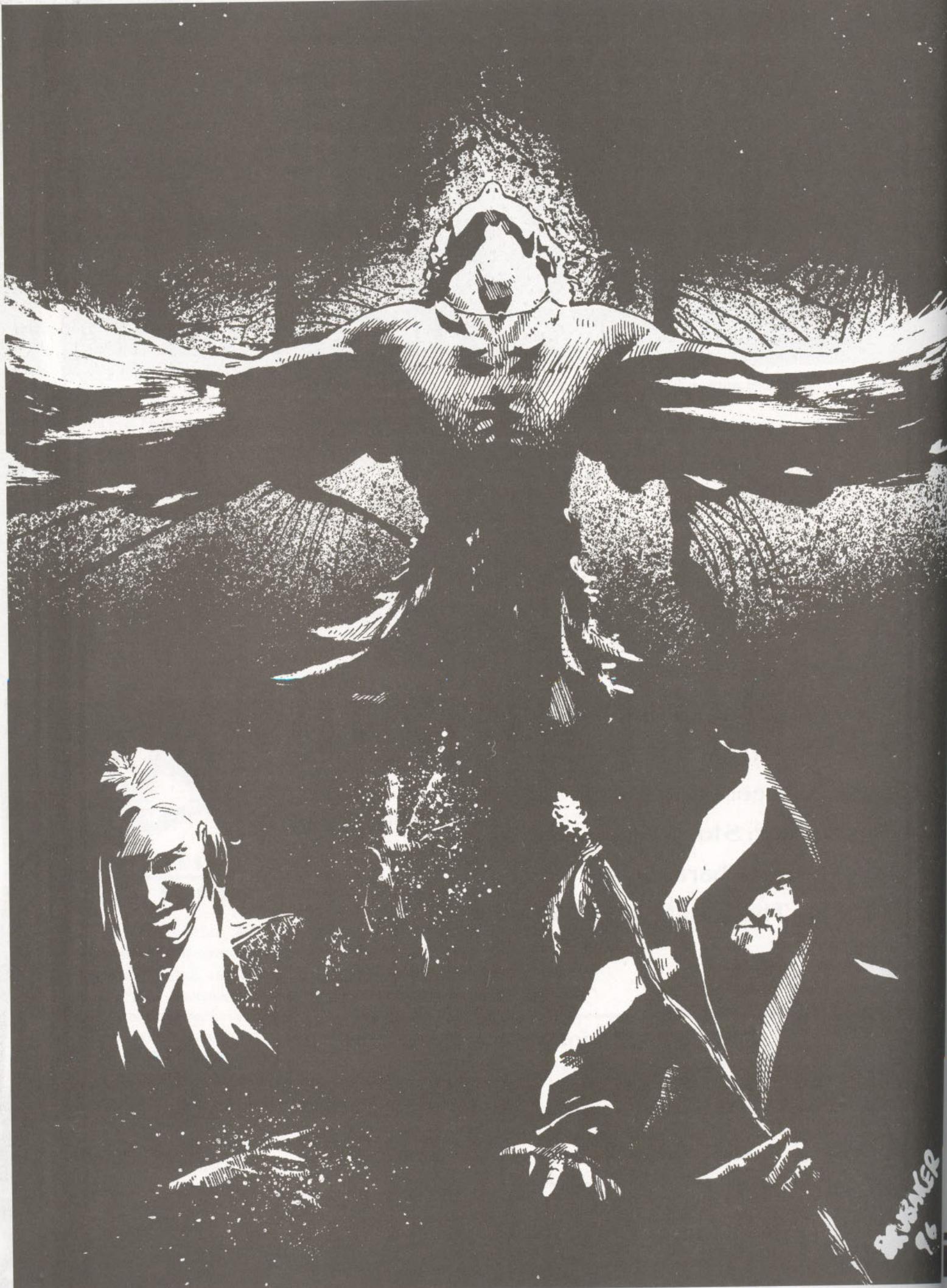
And for the **Vampire: The Dark Ages** crew, especially Jen and Larry. The book rocks.

HORIZON

THE STRONGHOLD OF HOPE

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Wesker

Introduction

*Number every star in springtime's sky, and there you count
the children I betrayed. In ignorance, inert; in doubt, mercurial;
in subversion and dissension, impotent: I could not save my heirs
of 15 generations! And while I foundered, the enemy's mailed fist
grew tight upon the world, and trapped my children in the circle
of the sky.*

*But patiently, like a rock in the torrent, I endured. Worn
away with waiting, I survived: flensed of fat, hard as bone.*

*Strength lies in wisdom. To face fear and survive it, that is
wisdom. With wisdom grows unity, and unity makes strength.*

*Now warm air rises to a summery wind. Every hour brings
report of voices raised in common will, and in these halls of
endless torpid murmurs, a ringing call resounds. Unsleeping and
expectant, my children hear — they rise and walk unfainting —
they run and will not weary.*

*As one, they seek the line of earth and sky, the garrote of
custom. They snap it like a filament and pass through.*

*Beyond, immensity: the Realm of Wish-in-wisdom, the
Word made manifest. There, beyond, my children locate hope.
They seek to birth the new.*

By their will, so is it done.



Where do the Traditions gather? What magickal world might evolve from the wills of an entire Council at war with reality? What might be the wonders, perils and intrigues of a land carved from creation's raw essence? Come with us to Horizon, and discover the answers.

Horizon: Stronghold of Hope is a sourcebook for Mage that describes the central Tradition Chantry, the meeting place of the Council itself. After five centuries of neglect, Horizon now draws new interest from a young and visionary generation of Council archmages. Can they bring unity to the feuding Traditions? Can Horizon enter its Summer phase of mature strength and return wonder to the world? The answers depend on the needs — and the deeds — of your chronicle.

Seasons of the Realm

Realms and Chantries mark their age in seasons, ranging from Spring to Winter. Spring Chantries are newly founded; fresh ideas and enthusiasm compensate for their inhabitants' lack of wisdom and resources. Having reached their peak power, Summer Chantries are strong, confident and very active — sometimes to the point of recklessness. By Autumn, a Chantry has stopped expanding and works to secure its gains; with accumulated wisdom and wealth, its masters wield great political clout. Winter Chantries are so lost in glorious memories and infighting that they fail to see their work collapsing about them. If a Winter Chantry has an influx of younger mages, it may be able to struggle through to a second, more prosperous Spring.

Horizon is a mega-Chantry in flux. From a hopeful beginning, it crashed down into Winter almost immediately, despite the power of its founders. Now, over 500 years after Horizon's creation, a new Spring has begun. Things are happening here; surely a mage, even an apprentice, can make a difference in this Realm....

How to Use this Book

Horizon has five chapters. The first, **Stations of the Realm**, recounts some momentous events in progress at the moment. This section consists of transcripts, made by a secret observer, of the Virtual Adept Dante's first visit to Horizon, accompanied by a Hollow One named Nile. Will their actions have some great significance in the long run, or is this simply "business as usual" for the Council? **Stations of the Realm** has the potential to be either one, or both, depending on the importance you decide to give these events in your chronicle.

This unusual tale leaves you several options: As a story, it illustrates the multilayered intrigues the archmagi call sport. Things are never what they seem to be, especially in

the world of mages. Additionally, it suggests a jumping-off point for new chronicles by showing the events that might unfold from a simple "quick trip" in. For extra fun, this section may be copied and read aloud by a troupe, with players taking different roles. This could foreshadow future stories involving your own troupe's characters, especially if they have some pre-existing ties to the wizards involved. Finally, **Stations of the Realm** could simply serve as an introduction to this complex, yet very human, world.

The other four chapters are best left only to Storytellers. **Chapter Two, History**, briefly recounts the long, sad story of Horizon's Fall, Winter and Spring seasons. **The Realm** describes Horizon's geography, inhabitants, defenses and politics. **Storytelling** suggests how to use Horizon in your chronicle. **Characters** offers a range of characters your players might meet in the Realm. An **Appendix** tells how to create characters of Adept or archmage rank.

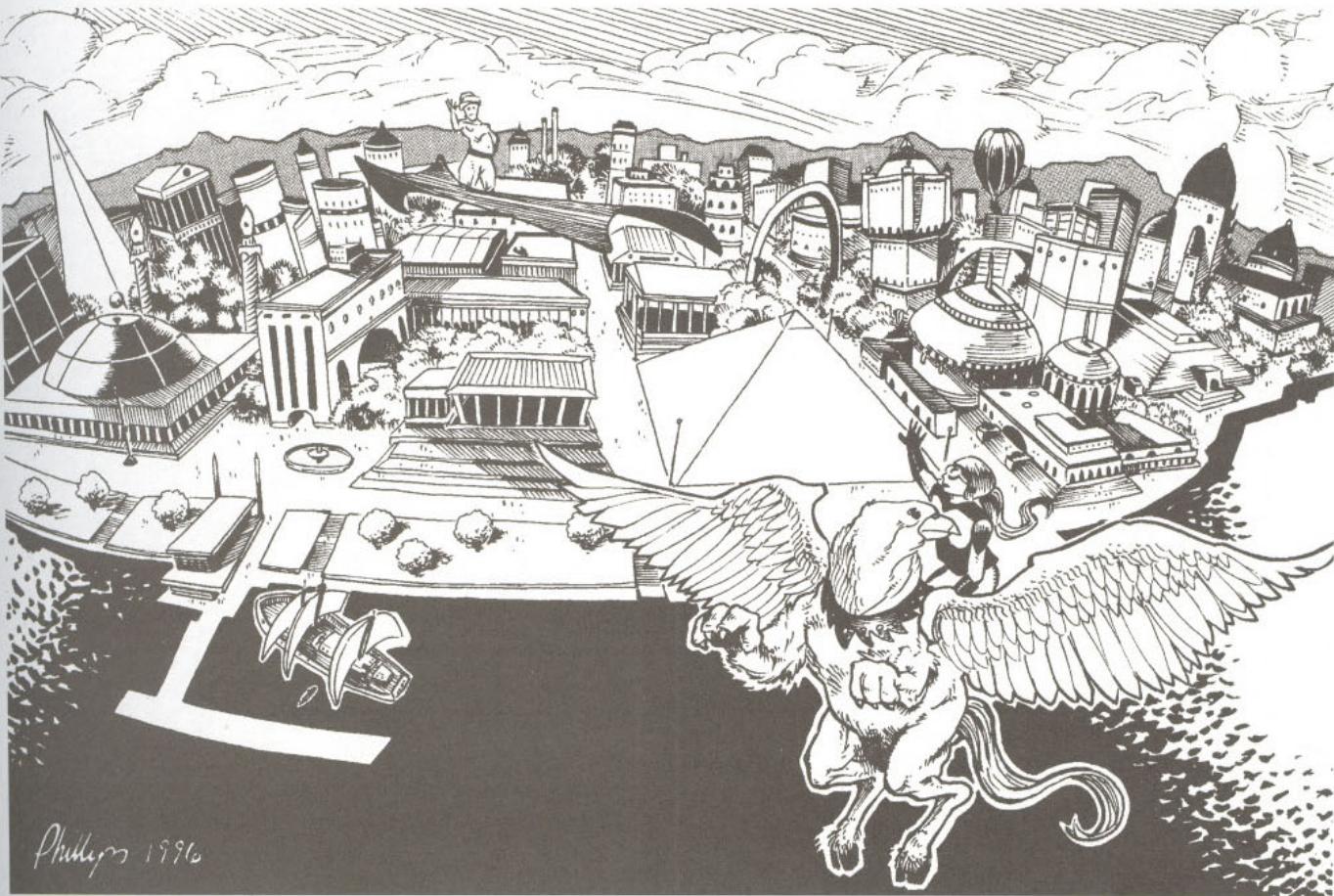
Horizon: Stronghold of Hope marks a turning point in the Ascension War. The Traditions still can't deliver a knockout blow to the Technocracy's plans, but they're about to get off the mat and land a few hard punches. Moreover, it offers an Otherworldly setting created by the Ascension War yet removed from its front lines.

Theme

A good theme for Horizon-based chronicles is renewal. After five centuries of bad luck and neglect, the Chantry is at last ending its extended Spring and moving toward Summer. Horizon resembles a neglected model train left for years on a shelf. Now the owners (the Traditions) are taking it down, dusting it off and seeing how it runs.

In a way, the rebirth of Horizon represents the first hopeful legacy of World War II. Willworkers Awakened since that time are now achieving Master status, and their rise brings with it their new patterns of thinking. They've seen the results of the old practices; now they're willing to experiment. The mood of a Horizon chronicle should be guardedly optimistic, full of expectation and the promise of change. The setting encourages an atmosphere of portentous magnificence. As they comprehend Horizon's seemingly limitless power, mages should feel they walk in the hallowed halls of history itself, where every action can cause endless ripples throughout the Tapestry. "If a spider coughs in the upper reaches of the Council Chamber, it is said, every mage on Earth hears it."

The irony of Horizon's new lease on life is this: Although created by human hands, the Realm has taken on a life of its own. Despite the long decline of the Council itself, Horizon has prospered. It's as if the inhabitants made their own reality here while the Masters squabbled. The Realm is a biosphere that, after half a millennium, has grown into a world. It may be that, in an inverted Resonance effect, the prosperity of the Realm has shaped the demeanor of its so-called masters.



Naturally, this is still the World of Darkness. Though it seems like a fantasy playland, Horizon has many traps and dangers outside the Council halls. Monsters, harsh weather, even local politics can pose a threat to travelers. Inside the Council chambers, Horizon faces the same tremendous obstacles that crippled it in the past — not least of all the dissension within the Traditions' own ranks. The crucial difference that may bring success from defeat is the enlightened dynamism of youthful mages. Your players' mages.

Mood

Horizon is a land of wonder, carved by magick and shaped by desires. Here, the refugees from Earth's bygone Mythic Ages roam huge mountain ranges and delve beneath bottomless seas. The land is wild, its cities sparse by human standards. Horizon is big, loaded with potential adventures and packed with secrets. Whatever the tale may be — a Council intrigue, a hunting party, an infiltration, whatever — the sense of wonder and mystique behind this magickal land should color your chronicles. The Gothic-Punk cities fall far behind when you visit Horizon. Enter freely, and enjoy....





BRÜSKER
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Chapter One: Stations of the Realm

Youth is the flame that ignites the future. Power is merely polish on blunted blades.

—Master Porthos Fitz-Empress, *The Fragile Path*



Scene One: Gateway Greeting

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.1
FROM OPERATIVE JG, HORIZON
TO CABAL MASTER — CLEARANCE
FOUR

As ordered, the report on latest activities at Horizon of Virtual Adept "Dante" (Desmond Collingsworth) and companion. These transcriptions will follow at approximately 10-minute intervals. Forward to Sha'ir at your discretion. —JG

LOCATION: HORIZON REALM GATEWAY
TIME OF OBSERVATION: 14:05

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE (Master, Adepts) and NILE (Mary Elizabeth Frances Wentworth, rank unknown, Hollow) materialized in state of evident exhaustion. Physical descriptions:

[DANTE: Black male (American), 6' 1", 180 lbs. Age 27. Crewcut black hair, brown eyes, clean shaven. White turtleneck, gray slacks, tan loafers, tan trenchcoat. Portable computer (unknown make) in leather harness hanging from belt, flip-down transparent eye-screen (right eye) in place of monitor. Casual, confident manner.

[NILE: White female (American), 5' 4", 120 lbs. Age 23 (speculation). Shoulder-length brown hair, green eyes, pierced nostril (left). Close-fitting black T-shirt and slacks,

black leather jacket with two feathers (Tass? Talismans?), low black boots. Spotlessly clean. Tense manner.]

Dante: Whoohah! Right! Right! I knew we'd make it.

Nile: Jesus, I'm alive. I don't believe it. O thank you, Gaia. You headstrong bastard, you never said it was gonna be that tough getting here. O Lady, when that big bird thing rose up out of the darkness, I thought we were gonna fry for sure!

Dante: The warding here is tougher than I expected.

Nile: Well, duh! They've only had about a thousand years to work up defenses—

Dante: 500. And they didn't have Adepts to help, which is why we made it. Come to that, I don't know that this was so much tougher than hacking, say, Israeli defense computers.

Nile: Yippee. We could have just waited for that old looney to bring us here safely, since he *invited* us, but nooo—

Dante: I've never been much for letting people lead me around by the hand. Even Porthos.

Nile: Yeah, I know, not "elite." But this isn't VR, Dante. You can't expect to hack the real world like you hack the Web.

Dante: You're wrong. This reality is as virtual as any other. You know the work of Roger Penrose? Sleeper physicist, mathematician? Penrose has this theory that matter is made of incredibly tiny "twistors," tangles in the topology of spacetime. "If this is true," he said, "then we are all composed of abstract mathematics." I think he's right. I'm trying to hack those mathematics.

Lots of Adepts want to move the world onto the Digital Web. I used to say that was the way to Ascension. Now I'm starting to think we've actually been living in a Web, all along. Maybe the key is to merge the two and—

Nile: Not to interrupt your Reality Hacker speech, because you know how much I love listening to you pontificate at tiresome length, but have you looked around? This place is beautiful! Where are we?

[Physical description of area summarized here for reference. For full description consult Dispatch 1954.03.16.1.]

[Subjects standing 22.3 meters north of Gate of Forces, along East Crystal Bastion. **Gate of Forces:** One of nine gates permitting entrance through the diamond barrier known as **Crystal Bastion** to the city of Concordia, which surrounds Horizon Chantry. Gate composed of handsome alchemical oak/adamantine hybrid, glowing sigils of Force inscribed into surface. Subject glanced at Crystal Bastion, probably referencing rainbow effects from Bastion's diamond prism catching sunlight. Fertile, rolling hills to east, light northeast breeze, blue sky tapering into rose-golden glow over northern Horizon Range.]

Dante: This was the easiest entry point, so I guess this must be the front door.

Nile: Oh, ick, my boots have gotten dirty.

Dante: You'd feel dirty in a Silicon Valley clean room.

Nile: Hey, you mind? Weird that they don't have any guards. Of course, given that it was pure hell getting here—

Dante: You've made your point. Give it a rest. This looks like a big place, so if there are guardians, they must be stretched pretty thin.

Mevara: You are correct. I have only now returned from patrol.

[Here guardian spirit **DESIDIOUS MEVARA** manifested, trapping Dante and Nile by moulding earth about their feet using Charm Imprisoning Earth. Description and background of Desidious Mevara summarized here for reference. For full description consult Dispatch 1966.11.12.2.]

[DESIDIOUS MEVARA:] Elemental Umbrood recruited by Master Porthos Fitz-Empress, Deacon Primus (Doissetep), circa 1577 from El Dorado, south central North America, at that time still part of the Tellurian. Given to Horizon as gift by Master Porthos, 1579.

[Desidious Mevara, named for its slothful nature, typically manifests by shaping ground underfoot into caricatures of its victims' faces. Lethargic and not notably intelligent, but possessed of tremendous will, countermagick and power.]

Nile: Oh, jeez, Dante!

Dante: I'm on it. [Typed on portable computer.] No good. [Continued typing.] No! God damn! This thing's countering me!

[Mevara's Imprisoning Earth charm had by now imured the two as far as their waists. Nile attempted an Effect, conjectured to be a conjunction of Forces and Matter, without result. Dante attempted numerous Effects of a nature that has so far resisted analysis, presumably Correspondence-related, without result.]

Nile: Damn it, do something!

Dante: Aah! I lost Chicago!

Nile: What? Were you co-locating again?

Dante: Not now! Look, honey, I gotta bail. I'll come back for you—

Nile: Bail? Desmond Collingsworth, don't you *dare*—
Dante: God damn! It's got me!

Mevara: None who enter without consent may leave.

[Encased in earth to the neck, both mages were rendered ineffectual. Desidious Mevara began moving both, still encased, to the Council Chamber.]

Dante: Great. Just great. What a loser.

Nile: Hey, you! Stoneface! Where are you taking us?

Mevara: I transport you to the Council Chamber, that the archmagi may deal with you as they see fit.

Nile: "Archmagi." Prithee and forsooth, we're wearing our antiquated outfit today, are we? [Pause.] Hey, can't you go any faster? We're gonna die of old age here. [Pause.]

Dante, you know I hate it when you co-locate, I've told you again and again—

Dante: I was just typing some thank-yous to the clued-ins who gave me the access maps to get here, okay? I remember when you used to love having two or three of me at a time.

Nile: Oh — sex, sex, sex — that's all it is with you. [Paused.] I can't believe you were going to leave me here. That's lame.

Dante: [Sighed.] And so the elite master of the Virtual Adepts comes calling to Horizon.

[Mevara continued ferrying the two toward the Council Chamber. Next dispatch transcribes observation there.]

Scene 2: Council Characters

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.2

LOCATION: HORIZON COUNCIL CHAMBER

TIME OF OBSERVATION: 14:20

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE and NILE arrived at chamber entrance, still immured by guardian spirit DESIDIOUS MEVARA. Subjects in spirited argument; not all words discernible.]

Nile: It isn't that I don't trust you, it's just that for weeks you've been—

Dante: —if you could turn loose of your suspicions and be less worried about our relationship, not to mention your own progress, not to mention that damned cleanliness fetish, you'd—

Nile: Oh yeah, my fetish, it's always my neuroses. No neuroses on your side, no. "Hi, I'm Mister Dante, I'm so well adjusted, I spend 20 hours a day translated into electrons because, you see, my body is only meat—"

Dante: I never said "only meat"! It's just my perspective, okay? Look beyond the end of your nose and you'll see— whoa!

Nile: If you'd look around, you'd notice—uhhh...

[Horizon's Council Chamber is presumably so familiar that a summarized physical description is unnecessary. It is noted that in recent years, the high central dome has turned a deeper shade of green, for reasons unknown. Also, the Great Seats around the Table Cenacle have in recent months reordered their positions six times at approximately 20-day intervals, apparently spontaneously. This, too, occurs for unknown reasons.]

Nile: Holy Lady. [Pause.] Is this the Council Chamber?

Dante: Must be. I've never been here. [Pause.] Nobody said it looked like this.





A.S.

Nile: Nobody could. What a place! Can you feel the air here? You know what I mean?

Dante: Yeah. The Resonance. Solemn, momentous. Big.

Nile: I feel like if I snapped a twig here, it would level a forest on Earth.

[Here entered custos **ZVOLEN LUCENIK**, Major-domo of Horizon. Description and background of Lucenik summarized here for reference. For full description consult Dispatch 1957.04.16.1.]

[LUCENIK:] White male (Transylvanian), 5'2", 150 lbs., apparent age 66. Bald, bloodshot blue eyes, white eyebrows, large hooked nose, thin lips, square chin. Burly build. Ceremonial costume: dark blue double-breasted jacket with gold fringe and silver buttons, blue pants with gold piping, black boots. Former vampiric ghoul, recruited to Horizon from Carpathian Mountains 1956 by Hermetic Adept Janos Sturvik (Chantry Mlada, Prague). Healed of ghoul status 1957 by Nightshade (Council Master, Verbenia). Courteous to Masters, officious or gracefully sardonic to others.]

Lucenik: Well, two more visitors, eh? Two more, and no more to reckon with than the previous thousand. Thought you would pull your little prank upon the greatest Chantry in the Tellurian? Did you think that?

Dante: Hi. We're here because—

Lucenik: Tut! I shall brook none of your mealy-mouthed excuses, for I have heard them all.

Nile: Hey, man, this is Dante! Wake up!

Lucenik: [Chuckled.] And are you then his Vergil? You have guided him far away from his Inferno, child. And yet, you may find that your punishment reminds you of home.

Nile: Hey, tell this thing to let us loose. I'm getting filthy here, and if this stone guy has stained my clothes, I'm gonna make someone eat the dirt.

Dante: We're here at the invitation of Master Porthos.

Lucenik: Oh, are you? Master Porthos Fitz-Empress, Deacon Primus of Doissetep? I keep track of all the comings and goings in Horizon, and I have not seen a hair — no — nor flake of skin from Master Porthos for most of a decade. I know nothing of any invitation. In any case, whatever his status at Doissetep, Master Porthos has no power to issue invitations to Horizon. I suspect you both to be vagrant thieves.

Nile: Man, what is your trip? Are you a cop?

Lucenik: Young lady, regard me as King-Under-the-Mountain, a legendary power who can imprison you for a century and a day. Therefore, it behooves you to behave yourself.

Dante: Hey, there's the librarian. Mulhouse! Over here!

[Horizon archivist **NICHODEMUS MULHOUSE** entered from passage leading to library. Physical description

summarized here. For full description consult dispatch 1554.09.05.1.

[MULHOUSE: White male (Byzantine), 5'4", 90 lbs., age 676, apparent age 100. Bald, sunken white eyes, prominent nose, wrinkled skin. Hunched, emaciated. Wears shapeless monastic robe and sandals. Cantankerous, suspicious, asocial manner.]

Mulhouse: What? Who calls?

Lucenik: Hush, you! Don't bother the old man.

Dante: It's me, Dante, from the Virtual Adepts.

Mulhouse: Eh? Ah. So it is. What brings ye here? Don't think you're going to bother my brain again, I'll tell ye that!

Lucenik: Master Nichodemus, you know these intruders?

Dante: I led the project to download his brain onto the Doissetep computers. Actually, we did it in the Web.

Mulhouse: And now ye're back for more, are ye? Never! I know your sort. They did their computer jiggery-pokery to my brain!

Nile: [Aside to Dante.] That explains why he has so little left.

Dante: Don't worry, Master, we're still cataloguing what we've got. [Aside to Nile.] Turns out the download is as stubborn as he is.

Lucenik: Well, so you know Master Nichodemus. Very well, I escalate you both from trivial nuisances to the status of felon. I shall commence an investigation, with testimony from interested Council elders. Meantime, I shall encyst you in shieldedoubliettes two miles below this Chamber.

Mulhouse: Good, good... [Left via side passage.]

Nile: Hey!

Dante: I wouldn't recommend that.

Lucenik: Hah! Mevara, bring them this way.

Master Porthos: Stop.

[Here **MASTER PORTHOS FITZ-EMPRESS** manifested in the front doorway. Physical description of Master Porthos is here presumed unnecessary.]

Lucenik: Master Porthos!

Nile: About damn time.

Master Porthos: What is this? Are my invited guests treated like guttersnipes? Release them!

Lucenik: [Brief pause.] Master Porthos, I must insist that this matter falls within the majordomo's jurisdiction, and that, with all due respect—

[Master Porthos waved his hand, invoking an Effect presumed to be a conjunction of the Forces, Spirit and Entropy Spheres. (Analysis to follow.) Large quantities of Mevara's substance dispersed explosively, freeing Dante and Nile unharmed.]

Master Porthos: [To Lucenik.] Leave.

Lucenik: Yes, sir. [Left at speed.]

Master Porthos: [To Mevara.] Back, Umbrood! Back to the duty I charged you with, these four centuries past!

Mevara: Know, Porthos, that each day of those four centuries has increased my hatred for you, and that each day I contemplate my revenge.

Master Porthos: Begone, thing of earth! When your strength matches my own, then come forth and battle me. Until then, silence and obedience!

Mevara: I obey. [Dissolved into the floor.]

Master Porthos: [To Dante and Nile.] Welcome. Would you like a snack or drink or anything?

Nile: I, uh...

Master Porthos: Never mind. I will have Mevara fetch you something. Mevara! [To himself] That infernal Umbrood lacks a servant's instincts.

Mevara: [Appeared, slowly this time, from floor.] What now?

Master Porthos: Fetch my guests a flacon of bamboo wine and a basket of kola nuts from the Kanisa wa Kweli. The Euthanatos will not mind. [In afterthought] And no more of your insolence, or I shall stuff you into a sack of stinging Umbrabeetles and throw you to the griffins! [Mevara bowed and disappeared.] [To Dante and Nile.] There. The Euthanatos, for all their muttering about mutability and impermanence, offer the best food in Horizon. I trust you had a pleasant journey? Come, sit. Rest your feet. [Gestured toward Great Seat of Correspondence and 10th Seat at the Table Cenacle. Sat between Dante and Nile in the Seat of Forces. Dante and Nile seated themselves with uncomfortable hesitation.]

Nile: [Aside to Dante.] Isn't this illegal or something?

Master Porthos: The last time I saw you, you were both children. Now look at you! Master Dante, you must be nearly 17. And my Lady Nile, you look almost 15. [Patted knees of Dante and Nile.] You remind me of my own children.

Nile: [Grimaced.] And you look nearly a thousand. [Dante glared at Nile.]

Master Porthos: [Chuckled distractedly.] Almost. [To an absent Mevara.] A curse on you! Where are our refreshments?

Mevara: [Appeared from earth with tray, goblets and decanter, panting.] Here, Master Porthos. [Placed items on Table Cenacle.] May I go now?

Master Porthos: Be off, fulsome factotum of filth! [To Nile and Dante.] Don't be shy. These are better than your customary cheese puffs, Wing-dongs and Ho-hums. [To himself.] Though more interesting alchemical amalgam, those.

Dante: Not to change the subject, but I was wondering why the staff didn't know we were coming.

Master Porthos: Oh, that. I decided to invite you on my own initiative. [Dante and Nile looked at each other with worried expressions.] Perhaps you know Masters Witz and Phuttaison and the Lady Agatha Marsh? I invited them and a number of others, as well. You should endeavor to meet them while you're here. Why do you look so astonished? Of course, I'm not an official member of Horizon Chantry, but there are certain privileges that one gains with age, among them the ability to defer one's adherence to house rules with immunity and *sans mens rea*. [Pause.] You have not studied Latin, have you? [Mumbled to himself.] Reminder 213b: Tuesday, overhaul United States educational system. [To Dante and Nile.] *Sans mens rea*, without a guilty mind. Of course, it helps that most of our colleagues here think that, like Hamlet, I am *non compos mentis*, not of sound mind. Maybe they're correct. [Snorted.] Who knows? In any case, because the Council has been mired in inaction for hundreds of years, I finally took it upon myself to find new Masters capable of making changes. Heaven knows, we need them. Do you know that Council attendance in the last five decades has declined by almost 75 percent? It's an embarrassment! If they knew of it, the Technocracy would be laughing through their sleeves at our inability to manage ourselves. Regardless, the Council theoretically meets every nine years at summer equinox. Before you were born, a representative from every Tradition at least made the effort to appear at Council. Whether they were cogent or not was the issue back then. Yet at the 58th Meeting in 1988, only three — *three!* — representatives bothered to show: Julian Spence, Lady Charlotte Quay and our illustrious and somewhat dense Hermetic representative Master Sao Cristavao. Two envoys of yours, Nile, showed too, but because I could not be there to moderate, that officious ghoul Lucenik ejected them as if they were nothing more than snippings of Prokaryote. Worse, because only a third of the Council was convened, the hands of those representatives who *were* present were tied. By law, two-thirds of the Council must be present for a vote to be made. Pymander's Pyjamas, there wasn't even anything to vote on! The whole event was an abomination—

Dante: We—

Master Porthos: —I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. The 57th Council Meeting in 1979 was something of a fiasco, too. Only five representatives appeared then, seemingly more interested in bragging about their Traditions' accomplishments over the past nine years than in promoting new programs or coming up with fresh ideas. Master Sao Cristavao was the worst of the lot — at least the others had the decency to tell the truth. If he were to be believed, by now the Hermetics — blindfolded and with two hands tied behind their backs — would have defeated MECHA, converted the Nephandi and brought humanity to mass Ascension. In *The Fragile Path*, I referred obliquely to what I believe is the cancer of Horizon, the decline of spiritual self-respect among the Traditions—

Dante: Yes, I—

Master Porthos: —you read it, then. Good! We need many more like you. My point is not merely that we have allowed our history to shape us into a demoralized cluster of skulking idealists, but it is also that *we can do something to change it!* [Porthos impacted fist on Table Cenacle. Saxum Oculorum sparked.] It is not a new cycle. Summer follows Spring follows Winter follows Fall. I have seen it before. I now realize that I failed to mention something vitally important in my book: While *tempus dicit; sapientia audit* (while time speaks; wisdom listens) may be true, there also comes a time for wisdom to *act*. Horizon's Nodes may soon be under attack again. It is common knowledge that the Syndicate has slipped an economic noose around our National Park Nodes, but common understanding does not yet grant that danger comes from all quarters, not just from the Technocracy. We must get our act together now, stamp out these little fires so we have time to deal with the impending blaze — or the Technocracy will indeed steamroll us. Doissetep has proven to be a failure — a grand one at that, but a failure nonetheless — I am a failure, and now it's up to you young folks to get this show on the road.

Nile: I'm sure—

Master Porthos: Ah! Ho, ho! A signpost of hope for the future — a young mage (are you already a Master?) who is *sure!* [Chuckled.] That's what we need! [Nile crossed arms, expression of annoyance apparent on face.] Don't you see? You are the future! For over 500 years, Horizon has stumbled in and out of illumination, always lacking unity through cooperation. After half a millennium, it now wields the scepters of strength and experience. Yet, until now, it lacked the dynamism that would enable it to unfold and reach out to overturn the stasis of the present paradigm. Summer beckons! A new hope knocks at the Traditions' portal! Mystical signs and portents abound! Take a look around: What do you see? Not nine, but 10 Seats of Power here at the Table. The inner perfection of mind and spirit must now turn outward to seek unity and renewal. It is an auspicious beginning, and the 10th Seat does not speak of it alone. The rift, the 10th land on the continent of Posht, has opened up for the mage that occupies that Seat. I believe that Horizon speaks to us through the tongue of its Resonance — our Avatars are verging on a new degree of illumination courageously capable of looking outward for new hope! Young lady, you of all people should understand this!

Nile: [Stunned pause.] Man, I know you can blow me up just by thinking about my underwear size, but I have to say, you're crazy as a soup sandwich.

Dante: Eh, uh... don't mind Nile. She's—

Master Porthos: [Laughed at length. Nile and Dante exchanged looks. Dante nervously checked his watch.] I must leave now to fetch the last of the new Masters. [Stood. Dante and Nile followed suit.] Both of you should take some time to visit Horizon's subrealms and meet your peers. I'm confident that, together, all of you will come to a sense of what is required to get Horizon back on track. Here, take

this. [Reached into pocket and handed Dante a disk.] They're the protocols you should follow when you're entering the subrealms.

Nile: Well, where is—

Master Porthos: Do you see that hallway? [Pointed to Hall of Garlands, hall leading to portal of Verbena subrealm.] Follow it to the Hanging Gardens and talk to Lady Charlotte Quay. *Verbum sap.* [Turned.] Oh, and keep the kola nuts. They intoxicate Mevara. [Master Porthos twitched finger, purple lightning bolts arced down from each of nine Fenes-trae in coffered dome, encasing him and causing him to disappear.]

Nile: That guy's nuts. What was he talking about, with all those "auspicious portents" and "Summer beckonings"?

Dante: Still, he's survived this long. Maybe he knows something.

Nile: I'll be damned if I'm going to start thinking Horizon's in trouble. Look at this power, man! Thousands of mages all across Earth probably heard that conversation. This place is *big!*

Dante: Well you can be damned, then. Porthos might be a bit loopy, but I think he's telling the truth. [Picked up the remaining kola nuts and walked toward Hall of Garlands.]

Nile: [Pushing in the Seat.] For someone who doesn't like having his hand held, you're awfully quick to take that old looney's. [Followed Dante through gateway.]

[Conversation ended 14:35. Next observation in Verbena domain. Transcript follows in next dispatch.]

Scene 3: GARDEN GLADE

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.3

LOCATION: VERBENA SUBREALM

TIME OF OBSERVATION: 14:36

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE and NILE entered Verbena subrealm, following skyclad protocol. Note that Dispatch 1779.02.04.1 requires update, as subrealm has been redesigned. Currently, entrance is marked by view of verdant valley and sparkling lake to west, gardens and shaded groves to north and east. Entrance area contains oak tree 50 yards in diameter, surrounded by ivy-clad stone dormitories. Fragrant garden nearby grows variety of mundane and magickal flora, including ghostseed gardenias, pink paradox jasmine, Mexican love vines and double mock oranges. Fed from nearby brook, blooming specimens of golden Prime tree, Fuji weeping cherry and crape myrtle serve as shade trees. Full description to follow in later Dispatch.]

Nile: Oooh...

Dante: [Mimicked Nile.] Aahhh...



Nile: Would you stop? You're making fun of me, in this beautiful place.

Dante: It looks great. I just picture a coven of Verbena dancing around a cauldron and sacrificing a cat. Kind of takes away from the pastoral atmosphere.

Nile: Then you don't know what "pastoral" is really all about. The Verbena are okay with me. Kind of intense, but one of them taught me how to not need food.

Dante: They're more parochial than they need to be—

Nile: Oh, like the Adepts aren't!

Dante: —but personally, I don't have a problem with that. I've met enough savvy people in every Tradition to think maybe they all have a piece of something real. Not exactly elite, but not bogus.

Nile: Huh. Okay. You know, I like that about you. You can be such an arrogant know-it-all, but you're not a snob.

Dante: Thank you. [Paused.] For the record... [Paused.]

Nile: What?

Dante: Nothing, I was just gonna say... I, uh, I think you're the least parochial person I've ever met.

Nile: Thanks. I'm—I'm sorry about arguing with you before.

Dante: Me too.

Nile: [Breathed deeply.] Boy, I don't know what's coming over me. It's this place. I never saw so much green in my life. It makes me feel something like — healthy.

[Here entered **LADY CHARLOTTE QUAY** (Master, Verbena) quietly from nearby thicket. Physical description of Quay summarized here for reference. For full description, consult Dispatch 1991.12.21.4.]

[QUAY: White female (Canadian), 5'8", 170 lbs, age 38. Waist-length red hair, blue eyes, wide face, strong jaw, tanned skin. Stocky, muscular build, unusually strong hands. Naked, with exception of onyx ornament (Talisman?) on gold necklace chain, cornflower blooms in hair. Graceful, dignified manner.]

Quay: You're feeling the Resonance of this place. It is Nightshade's loveliest working.

Dante: Hi. You're Lady Charlotte Quay?

Quay: Call me Charlotte. And I recognize you. I'm honored, Master Dante. [Shook hands. To **Nile:**] Hello!

Nile: I'm Nile. Dante's apprentice. Sort of. [Shook hands.] I'm with the Tribe, in Greenwich Village.

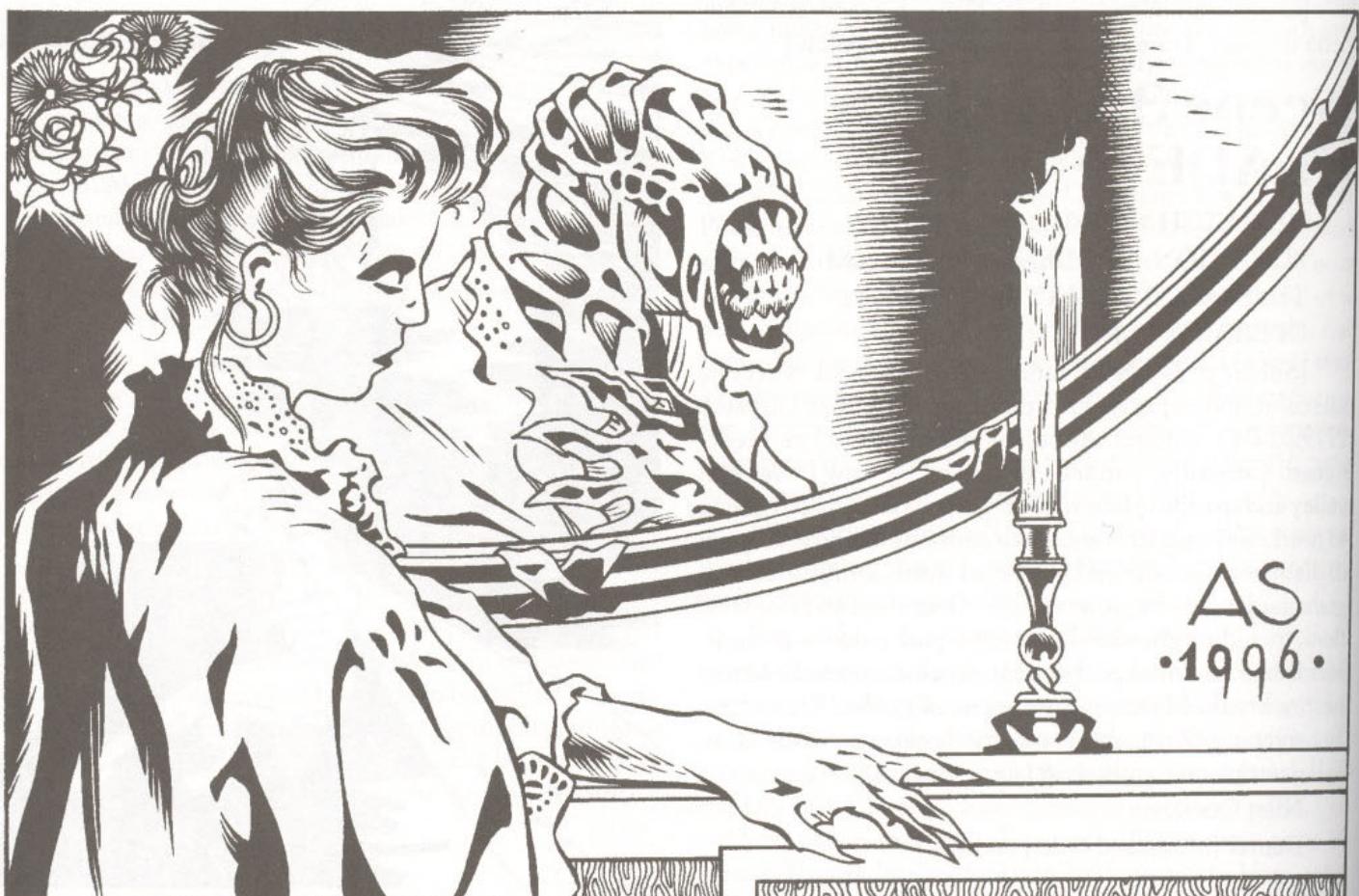
Quay: Oh, I've heard of them. You had that ghost trouble at a nightclub last Samhain, didn't you?

Dante: If that's what it was.

Nile: Yeah, I still think it was Leeches screwing with our minds.

Quay: Ghosts or not, your group saved all those Innocents very smoothly. Hannah Landless was reading tarot there that night, and she told me about it. My congratulations.

Nile: Thanks. This place is gorgeous! It kind of reminds me of the Adirondacks in upstate New York. Ever been there?



Quay: Many times. I believe Nightshade actually modeled this Node on parts of the Caucasus Mountains, east of the Black Sea. That was many centuries ago, though, early in Horizon's history. It seemed so powerful then, and this Node provided much of that power. You probably know that nowadays, Horizon controls tremendous Nodes all across America, through the National Park system.

Dante: I'd heard that. But last I heard, Congress was trying to gut the National Park system.

Quay: Yes, and we know who's behind that. We're taking care of it. Did Master Porthos invite you here? [Dante and Nile nodded.] I hoped as much. I guessed he's been up to something — he's been sneaking in and out of here for days, right under the majordomo's nose! He's made excellent choices for newcomers, I must say.

Nile: He didn't bring you in?

Quay: Oh, no, I'm the appointed — not to say "anointed" — Council representative, and have been since Nightshade retired to Autumn Circle several years ago. I gather Master Porthos is content to leave me in the Verbena seat, inasmuch as I've been agitating for exactly the kind of change he wants. We need fresh ideas! New blood! I'm 38, and though I love Nightshade dearly — she was my teacher — I don't intend to spend five centuries trapped in amber here, the way she did. Give me a break!

Nile: You're American?

Quay: Canadian. Born and raised in Toronto.

Nile: And you said you just turned 38. Don't tell me: You Awakened at Woodstock, right?

Quay: [Laughs.] Very good! You know, I think there were more Awakenings at Woodstock, day for day and head for head, than any time since the Ghost Dance 100 years ago. But I may have been the only "child of Woodstock" who didn't end up in the Cult of Ecstasy. Though whoever designed the public address system there would be prime material for the Etherites.

Nile: Dante's mom was hoping she could give birth to him at Woodstock. Isn't that what you said, Dante?

Dante: I heard her say that while she was carrying me. But I was born three weeks early. [Shrugged.] Where the meat comes out is not a real issue.

Quay: Possibly, but it was important to me personally. I had both my children under the World Tree in Summer Grove, one of our Shard Realms. Nightshade called it an auspicious place. But "the Wheel turns on its own path," as we say.

Nile: Wait, you lost me. It didn't turn out auspicious?

Dante: Nile...

Nile: I want to know, all right?

Quay: It's all right. Men in Black killed my lover and kidnapped my children eight years ago. So far as I've been able to find out, they're currently enslaved in MECHA.

Nile: Oh! I'm sorry. [Paused.] Isn't there anything you can, you know, do?

Quay: Absolutely. I'm going to help unite the Traditions, establish Horizon as our voice and the instrument of our will, develop a strike force of overwhelming strength and personally lead the assault that will destroy MECHA and free my children.

Nile: [Pause.] Oh.

Quay: But Horizon is not a weapon of vengeance. It must become a force for truth and wonder, a statement of tolerance among the Traditions. How many times in the past have we almost achieved unity, just to see pointless politicking destroy our hopes? Meanwhile, our enemies are united, and we all suffer at their hands. That must stop here. The new hope must start with us.

Nile: "Hope." Huh!

Dante: [Quickly.] I made a run on MECHA a long time ago, in my crazy days. It was highly un-fun. Charlotte, if you can put together a credible try at wiping it out, I'm in. But I tell you, I'd rather try to scrape the Swiss Army out of a Matterhorn bunker.

Quay: Thank you, Dante. But I want to pick up on Nile's remark about hope. I gather you don't feel hopeful?

Dante: Jeez, don't get her started.

Nile: I'm not "getting started" on anything, okay? Stop yanking my chain. I only think that — well, I like you fine, Ms. Quay, you're a hell of a lot more laid back than any other Verbena I've met. Getting your kids out of that slave camp is great, good luck to you! But if you think uniting the Traditions means "hope," you need to get out more. You can blow up MECHA and turn Horizon into the Summer of Love, but out there the world is still trading its rain forests and topsoil for cars and McBurgers and corporate wage slavery and skin magazines on CD-ROM and videos by the artist formerly known as Prince.

Quay: That's true. The world is in crisis. But at its base it is a spiritual crisis, a failure of vision. The Traditions are all about vision. Nothing will change the world until Sleepers exert their will. Right now they don't even know they have a will. We can show it to them, by our example. [Paused.] I gather, then, that you're not a Prince fan?

Nile: [Laughter.]

Dante: Don't get her started!

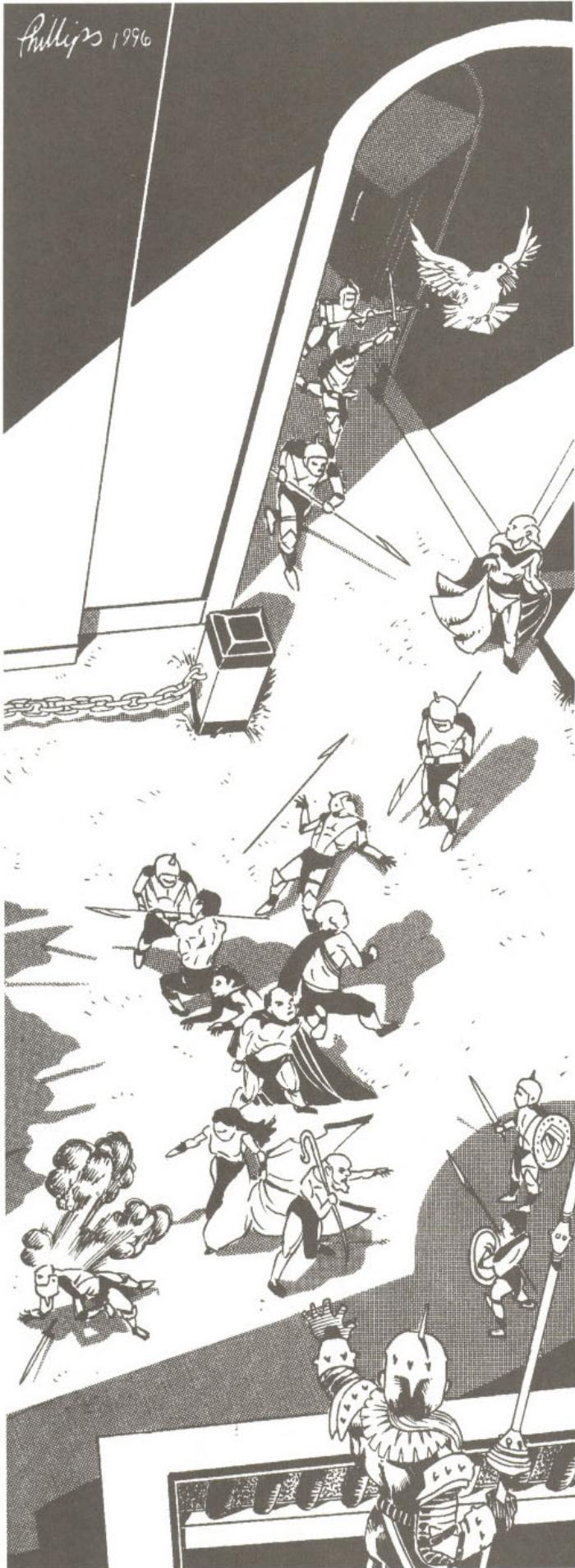
Quay: You know what I suggest? You might want to talk to some of the other Masters that Porthos has brought in. They've had a day or two to look around, most of them, and I'm very encouraged by the easy way they've settled in. Maybe you won't be persuaded that they represent Horizon's last best chance, but at least they're interesting company. All right?

Nile: I like you fine, Lady.

Dante: Okay, we're gone. Talk to you again, I hope.

Quay: I hope.

[Conversation ended 14:43. Next observation in Chorus domain. Transcript follows in next dispatch.]



Scene 4: Cathedral Clash

DISPATCH 1996.1.14.4

LOCATION: CHORUS SUBREALM GATEWAY

TIME OF OBSERVATION: 14:46

OPERATIVE: JG

Subjects DANTE and NILE approached entrance to subrealm, ignored prayer protocol. For full protocol description, see Dispatch 1490.05.16.1.]

Nile: That Charlotte is pretty cool. You think she's got a handle on this Horizon deal Porthos talks about? That these bigshots will cooperate with her?

Dante: If history is any guide, she and Porthos will bomb out like the last 175 attempts to unite the Council. This place is the United Nations — "the world's most expensive diplomatic gesture." It's got potential, but nobody on the Council wants to look like he's following someone else's lead.

Nile: But now the Virtual Adepts have arrived to show the way, right?

Dante: [Snorted.] "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master." Actually, I'd bet you and your tribe in Greenwich Village could give this old place a jolt. Charlotte liked you.

Nile: Did you think so? I thought she did. [Paused.] You know, that's the nicest thing you've said to me in a long time.

Dante: It is?

Nile: Yeah. [Long pause.] So, uh, you know, the Hollow Ones sent somebody to visit here a couple-three times. Asked if that 10th seat was open, just for grins, you know? Got zip. "Come back someday when you're grown up." Like hanging out here in this Umbral Vatican and backstabbing each other is what grownups do.

Dante: Speaking of the Vatican...

[For reference, summarized description of entryway and guards follows. For full description see Dispatch 1834.06.30.1.]

[High vaulted ceiling of anteroom Chapel of the Sun has round windows and cupola with oculus that allow sunlight in from sunrise to sunset. Fitted into gilt, pearl-studded walls are double-leaved doors to Chorus subrealm known as **Wisdom's Seal**. For reference, the Chorus considers these doors — crafted of virgin oak, plated in bronze, 17 feet tall and bejeweled with tiger eye and sunstone — Preeminent Universal Treasures.

[Two acolyte guards dressed in Vatican-style uniforms of purple and gold, feathered velvet caps, plastrons and grasping ceremonial pikes, were posted to either side of Wisdom's Seal.]

Guard: [Apparently miffed at subjects' lack of entry protocol.] Your entry permit, *please*.

Dante: Who wants it?

Guard: The Eminent Precisian Najjda Bantu, Prima Councillor with lawful custody of the seat of the Sphere of Prime.

Dante: Haven't got a permit. Where is Ms. Najjda?

Guard: Her Eminence is away. All who desire entrance to the Sanctified Penetralia of the Collegia Doctrina Soteriologica must offer prayer and have a permit from Her Eminence or from a duly authorized representative.

Nile: We're here by invitation of Master Porthos.

Guard: Master Porthos, Deacon Primus of Chantry Doissetep, has authority in neither Horizon nor — as a member of the Order of Hermes — in this domain.

[Here it is conjectured that Dante covertly typed on his computer or otherwise initiated a Correspondence Effect. A knocking sounded from behind the doors.]

Dante: Sounds like someone's inside.

[The perplexed guard opened one door. A duplicate of Dante leaned out.]

Duplicate Dante: It's okay, they're with me. Come on in, folks!

Guard: Halt! Come out here! You were not allowed inside!

Dante (original): But look, here we are. We're all inside already.

[Here Dante's Correspondence Effect imperceptibly everted space locally at the entryway, placed all present within the subrealm, just beyond the doors, and incidentally reversed the doors' facings in-for-out. Speculations on Dante's techniques to follow. One guard left in confusion while the other remained in alarmed silence. The Dantes merged.]

Dante: Hope you didn't mind that time.

Nile: [Laughter.] You're still cute sometimes, you know? Wow, look at this place! Is this where Michelangelo went when he died?

[For reference, summarized description of interior follows. For full description see Dispatch 1834.06.30.2.]

[Reference to the Chorus' lavish tabernacle: vaulted ceilings adorned with sacred paintings ranging in subject from creation myths to visions of an Apocalypse, sculpted colonnades, cross-ribbed vaults, double arches, alcoves displaying sculptural masterpieces and ancient relics; Gothic windows filtering soft light into apse and one stained-glass rose window over the nave; behind the altar, a tiered shrine of gold statuettes of religious figures lit by thousands of flickering votive candles.]

Dante: The way I understand it, this is just a little anteroom, or apse, or whatever it's called. The whole realm stretches endlessly, nothing but buildings, like a stack of cathedrals.

Nile: Jesus! Oops, I mean "gosh." Oh, listen to me, I'm reverting to Catholic school! Boy, I hate this kind of architectural posturing, this drive past the brain to impress the gut. If this Chorus person Porthos brought in tries to convert me, like most of the rest of them I've met, I'm leaving.

Witz: Not to worry, I've already made my quota for today.

[Here entered subject **RABBI ELIHU WITZ** (Master, Chorus) from sacristy to left of entrance. Physical description follows.

[WITZ: White male (South African), 5'8", 170 lbs., age 67. Short curly gray hair, black beard heavily streaked with gray, brown eyes, large nose, round face. Rotund, slow but graceful. *Yarmulke* (skull cap), conservative black suit, white shirt, black tie, *tallith* (prayer shawl), phylactery strapped to left arm. Congenial manner.]

Witz (continued): Greetings to you both. Call me Elihu, Elihu Witz. I take it you are the famous Dante? I am honored. And I have not met your lovely friend.

Nile: I'm Nile. Uh, nice place you have here.

Witz: You like it? We're thinking of putting in lime curtains and maybe a beanbag chair, what do you think? [Laughter.] I will tell you in confidence, it's—[To guard.] You, Mister Big Ears, could you leave us alone? We won't rip up the place. [The guard left.]—It's maybe not to the Chorus' credit that we devoted so much effort to these big cathedrals and temples and maybe not as much as we should have, sometimes, to our flock. Yet it's a true fact of human nature: We stand in a big beautiful place like this and it moves us, you know? It takes us to that place, the sacred place. You, Master Dante, I heard you can travel anywhere with that computer, but it takes a place like this to move us to where we can glimpse Divinity.

Dante: I think I've heard of you, Father—

Witz: Rabbi. Or Elihu, or just "you with the beard."

Dante: Rabbi. You got the Chorus to change its position on apartheid in South Africa. Your Chantry in Cape Town did major damage to the Syndicate there, and then a year later the whole white government fell apart.

Witz: I would not want you to think only I did all that! We were many dedicated people. And of course, in the end the Innocents did the hard work themselves, let's not forget.

Nile: Ah, I've been trying to place your accent. You're South African?

Witz: Funny you should ask. During the Holocaust I moved from Poland to Johannesburg with my family. I was just a child, asleep like everybody else. But in Africa — it's an amazing place. Have you ever been?

Nile: No.

Dante: Some sightseeing at Victoria Falls and Kilimanjaro. And the Pyramids.

Witz: What fascinated me as a young boy was the languages. You can't imagine what it's like, a land with so many dozens of

tribes, each with its own views, shown in its language. I am inevitably reminded of the Traditions, but I am digressing. In my teens, I was always wandering up in the Transvaal, talking to new people. Especially people who spoke a language new to me. I got to trying to see how quickly I could learn the language. The first time, oh! It took me weeks to learn, what was it — it must have been Zulu. But then the second one, Pedi — or Tswana, I forget — I managed to become fluent in that one in less than six days. And each language I learned made all the next ones easier.

So anyway, the miracle happened when I picked up the Sotho language during one intense conversation with this beautiful old man in a temple in Germiston. It suddenly came to me how each language's words shape our perceptions, and how by shifting languages I could reshape what I was seeing. The words changed faster and faster in my mind, like notes of music. And then, I'll never forget, I was looking out a little window at the temple courtyard, and there was a little spider crawling on the window. I thought about all the words I knew for "spider," and suddenly I was looking through the spider's eyes at myself, thinking spider language, and the spider heard the same music I heard. Or we were both notes in the same song.

So that was my Awakening, 40 years ago now. And, and — I knew I had a point — oh, yes — so if my accent doesn't sound exactly South African, that's why. It's a whole lot of southern Africa all at once, you might say.

Dante: Did Porthos invite you here?

Witz: Yes, he knew me somehow from the Chantry's apartheid work. You know, I've heard lots of things about Master Porthos, but I think none of us have really got his measure yet. I like him.

Nile: Are you going to help him try to unite Horizon?

Witz: Help? What can I do? I don't hold the Council seat. That's Her Eminence, Najjda Bantu — an impressive lady, pure of intent. She's away in Zaire, helping to track down the Ebola virus. Looking at the two of us, anyone at Horizon would think the Chorus was centered in Africa! But if you knew the continent's crisis, you would see that's where our work is urgently needed.

Nile: Huh. If you want to solve Africa's problems, start in Washington and London and Brussels. Fix the World Bank first, fix the agribusiness companies and, oh yeah, the international system of trade and investment, then you can fix Africa. Good luck.

Dante: [Under his breath.] Here we go again.

Witz: I see you have looked into the problem. We are all part of it, I know, but that means we can all help with the solution.

Nile: But only if Her Eminence gives you permission, right?

Dante: Nile!

Nile: Ahh, this "you're part of the solution" talk is just another sermon, Dante, like you'd expect to hear in this overblown cathedral, and just as empty. Elihu, my man, if you're gonna be a good little Chorus soldier, you might as

well hop a plane back to Cape Town, because if anything new does happen in Horizon, you'll just be in the way.

Dante: Nile, *chill!* He hasn't done anything to you.

Witz: Tell me, Nile, do you yourself support Porthos' plan?

Nile: Me? I'm just tagging along with Dante. Horizon can sink in the Umbra for all I care, if it's nothing but this same-old same-old where the Traditions do their stiff-neck act.

Witz: And if our necks limber up? If we start working together?

Nile: Say, why aren't you angry or something? Don't you know I've been insulting you?

Dante: Nile, I'll just sit over here and wait for him to blow you up, all right?

Witz: What have I got to be mad about? This lady, she's making sense. But my dear, listen to an old man. It's harder to make things happen on our own than with others. And when we work with others, we must make adjustments. Now, please answer my question: Would you support this plan of unity if it looked like the Traditions could achieve it?

Nile: Well — look, I look out for my bunch back in New York, and my two cats and maybe my parents and my no-good brothers.

Witz: So whatever becomes of Master Porthos' latest valiant attempt to unite us, you'll have no part in it regardless. So why your passion, if I may ask?

Nile: Yeah, well, I — well — I can see that the world is going downhill, but that doesn't mean I like to see people get out and push, right?

Witz: Right. I understand. I will tell you, so far as ways of getting around Her Eminence, there are not many, maybe not any. But then again, she has ears, she can listen. So I can join in and help Master Porthos while she's away, and when she's back, I can persuade her it's for the best — and you are certainly showing me how, young lady. Sound good? Hey?

Nile: Sounds good. Hey.

Witz: Of course, all of this grand unity depends on Master Dante here, too. Have you passed your test yet?

Dante: Test?

Witz: Well, that's too strong a word. More a demonstration of skill. You didn't know? Master Porthos asked each of us to show off our skill in some way. Just a little get acquainted thing. Me, I was privileged to evoke for everyone the Divine essence that is within us all.

Nile: And you did that — how?

Witz: Well, you would say that I was just making manifest the Patterns of Prime within each living thing. How you say it doesn't matter. It was a lovely, spiritual moment. Everyone was glowing. Something like that, that's all you need to do.

Dante: Well. I guess if someone else passed this test, I can too. But I don't see where anyone here gets off claiming the authority to test me. Who else has taken this test? Was it the same for them? Did they pass the same way?

Witz: Really, I'm not the one you need to talk to. Some of the other Masters might know more. You might want to talk with the Euthanatos Master, a Scottish woman named Agatha Marsh. She and the Akashic Brother were the first two big wheels that Master Porthos brought here.

Nile: Both at the same time? Oh boy, I'll bet the hope for unity went away right there.

Witz: See for yourself. They're in the Realm next door. Meanwhile, if you'll excuse me, it's time for my devotions. I'm sure I will see you later.

[Conversation ended 14:53. Next observation in Euthanatos domain. Transcript follows in next dispatch.]

Scene 5: Go Game

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.5

LOCATION: EUTHANATOS SUBREALM GATEWAY

TIME: 14:55

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE and NILE approached entrance, ignoring blood protocol. See Dispatch 1655.07.02.2 for details. Entrance is spartan circle of white marble 12 feet across and two feet deep, in shape of Greek letter omega, unguarded, with blackness beyond.]

Nile: The whole Euthanatos trip of black capes and vampire buddies and "more doomed than thou," "half in love with easeful death" and all that — it just creeps me out.

Dante: Not to disagree, but they'd probably say it reminds you to face your mortality.

Nile: Then why are they so spooky about it, huh? Tell me that. I've only let a couple of them get within arm's reach, but they were ugly, they stank and they had these fixed stares. If that's their idea of Awakening, I'd rather sleep.

Dante: What bugs me is their old feud with the Akashics — hmm. I'll bet it's not safe to enter that archway without permission. Let me scan it. [Typed on computer.] Nothing. Hmmm.

Nile: Who'd want to go in anyway? It'll be darkness and clammy fog and clanking chains. If you want the Haunted Mansion, let's do Disneyland.

Dante: Well, I need to find out more about this alleged test. I'm going in. [Paused.] And I'd like you with me. Everyone seems to like your company.

Nile: And what about you?

Dante: [Pause.] I like your company too.

Nile: Okay.

[Dante and Nile entered the gateway.]

Nile: Dante. This is... a garden.

[Description of Euthanatos subrealm summarized here for reference. For full description consult Dispatch 1976.02.14.1.]

[Curved flagstone path leads through the Euthanatos' Japanese-style Shinto rock garden and into the Vajra Teahouse, located centrally in subrealm. Around rocks, sand is raked into flowing, concentric rings, forming the mystick patterns of immortality and impermanence (cf. Dispatch 1753.06.14.1). Two pink azaleas bow to visitors at the pavilion near teahouse's rice-paper screen entry doors.

[From pavilion, subject **AGATHA MARSH** (Master, Euth) walked across sand without disturbing it (presumed conjunctional Effect of Matter and Forces; see Dispatch 1995.01.12.2 for analysis). Physical description of Marsh summarized here for reference. For full description, consult aforementioned dispatch.]

MARSH: White female (Scots), 5'11", 145 lbs, age 40. Short black hair with white streaks at temples, large green eyes, narrow face, high cheekbones, pointed chin, thin lips, prominent smile. Slender build, long fingers. Wore trim peach-colored caftan, trousers and sandals. One fresh reed clipped to lapel with a copper clasp. Light, detached manner.]

Marsh: Welcome. I'm Agatha Marsh.

Dante: My name's Dante, and this is Nile. Is this the Euthanatos domain? Doesn't look like we expected.

Marsh: Many people say that. I suggested this design to my teacher, Master Prambanan, when he remodeled the Node about 20 years ago. The last version was a bleak sort of desert, lots of shifting sand. Magickally evocative, of course, but not suitable if you cared to enjoy a nice cup of tea.

Nile: [Looked sidelong at Dante.] Tea.

Marsh: Yes. Would you care for a cup? I take it you're the Master Dante, of the Virtual Adepts? Master Porthos mentioned he'd be bringing you.

Dante: Just "Dante" is fine. Porthos invited us, but we actually made it here ourselves.

Nile: Just!

Marsh: [Smiled.] You did that! Congratulations. I tried reaching Horizon on a dare many years ago — not so many that I shouldn't have known better! The last stretch proved too much for me, and this was after I'd made three visits to the Shadowlands. That's saying something! Here, come and meet Master Sapachai.

[All three subjects walked toward the teahouse, by a circuitous route on a line of flagstones.]

Nile: The Shadowlands — that's where you're supposed to go when you die, right?

Marsh: Well, it's a bit more complicated than that, but yes.

Nile: So you—you almost died three times?

Marsh: Three times up to that point. Then eight more after that.

Dante: Jeez!

Nile: Lady!

Marsh: Pretty extreme, I know. I was working through some personal problems that came with my initiation. It happens rather often in this Tradition. Death is a catharsis for some, a troubling insight for others. My Master and my other teachers had only sketchy facts about the Shadowlands. I felt I needed to know more, and so I went there an absurd number of times.

I did pills, injection, monoxide, cryogenic freezing — that was weird! — electrocution, biofeedback... Foolhardy, really. I was looking for a reason why. A reason for death.

Dante: And?

Marsh: Never found it. If you want the truth, I got bored! Not with death, the Great Cycle, but bored with mere dying. That's when I truly accepted death. My Mastery dates from that time.

Then I went to America, where I've been involved in the Right-to-Die Movement and in burial societies. America represents the Great Denial of the Great Cycle. People grow old obsessed with staying young, ruin their health with bad food, bad air, countless chemicals. Then, on the brink of transition, when they should be making their peace with the world, they suffer in needless misery for weeks or years, hooked to some machine, gradually wasting away in a coma. Finally they die, surrounded by strangers, having bankrupted their families. Horrid. Horrifying.

Dante: You know, I suspect Nile wants to address that issue. Am I right, Nile?

Nile: Ms. Marsh, it's one thing to come back from death 11 times, but that's like Parcheesi compared to trying to reform the modern medical establishment. For starters—

Dante: [Under his breath.] Why did I see this coming?

Nile: —doctors wait for you to get sick and then pump you full of drugs, instead of trying to prevent disease in the first place, because sickness is where the money is! They can pad their bill by 20-thousand bucks with "heroic measures" that keep some poor bastard alive, in agony, for an extra two days. You Euthanatos go in for the "Good Death," right? You won't get anywhere with the Right-to-Die stuff until you knock off the pharmaceutical company executives and insurance lobbyists.

Marsh: I admire your command of the issue. However, we don't murder. We grant release from suffering.

Nile: Fine. Grant thousands of patients release from the suffering those rich bastards inflict.

Dante: So! Nice place, did I mention that? Who's this? Introduce us!

[Here subjects reached the teahouse. Inside, sitting at a Go board with game in progress, sat subject **SAPACHAI PHUTTAISONG** (Master, Akashics). Physical description summarized here for reference. For full description consult Dispatch 1996.01.12.5.

[PHUTTAISONG:] Asian male (Thai), 5'2", 130 lbs., age 54. Bald, black eyes, round face, stub nose, wide mouth. Very thin, wiry build. Wore Buddhist monk's orange robes,

sandals. Serene manner, constant smiles and nodding in conversation.]

Marsh: This is Abbot Sapachai Phuttaisong, from the Akashic Chantry at Wat Suan Dok in Chieng Mai, Thailand. Master Porthos has invited him to hold the Council seat of Mind.

[Phuttaisong rose and bowed to all.]

Dante: Hi, I'm Dante, from the Virtual Adepts. Have to tell you, this is the last place I expected to see an Akashic Brother.

[Here subject Phuttaisong communicated telepathically, presumably to overcome language barriers. These expressions are to date beyond this operative's surveillance and recording devices. Improvements expected soon.]

Dante: Right, sounds good.

Nile: What sounds good?

Dante: Umm. Master Sapachai, I'd like you to meet my apprentice, Nile, who is making her first explorations of Mind.

Phuttaisong: Ahh. Wonderful time, Miss Nile! I study at Wat Benchamabophit in Bangkok. Very young. One day I meditate long time, and then I feel minds of all other novices around me. Like walk in beautiful garden. Good luck!

Nile: Thank you. It sounds neat.

Dante: Were you two playing Go? It's interesting to see you getting along so well, when the Euthanatos and Akashic Brotherhood—

Marsh: Och! Don't let me ramble on about the feud. It's misguided, a misfortune. It's gone on the last thousand years for just the same reason the Troubles have kept on in northern Ireland — just the need for revenge. If I may quote Master Sapachai: "Revenge is attachment."

Phuttaisong: Nothing in our doctrine says we must battle. Awakened One — the Buddha — said we must act with compassion for all beings. Master Marsh does this. Many Euthanatos does — do this. There is — [Looked at Marsh. Conjecture: telepathic inquiry.]

Marsh: "Fable."

Phuttaisong: — fable about Buddhist monk who carries woman across a river. Miss Nile, you know of Buddhist ideas. Tell fable.

Nile: Wow, how did you know—? Oh, right. Master of Mind. Yeah, I heard that one when I traveled in northern Thailand. Two monks were walking in the forest, one old and one young. They came to a river, and a peasant woman there asked one of them to carry her across. The young monk turned away, because they're not supposed to have contact with women. But the old monk let her climb up on his shoulders and he carried her across.

So on the other side of the river, the two monks went on their way. They walked a long time, and all the while this younger monk was just seething at the old monk's violation of the rules. Finally he burst out, "How could you do that?" The old monk looked surprised, and he said, "I left that

woman on the river bank way back there, why are you still carrying her?" The point is to turn loose of unproductive attachments. Right?

Phuttaisong: That is right. Selfish attachment is source of all suffering. You have fine mind, Miss Nile.

Marsh: Hmm. If he says that, you can be sure it's true. I'm impressed.

Dante: I guess I am too. [Looked at Nile. Pause. To Marsh and Phuttaisong:] What do you two think about Master Porthos' plan to revive Horizon?

Marsh: It's exciting, isn't it? Long overdue, of course. Until the Traditions cooperate, we'll never get anywhere.

Phuttaisong: Now we go on past old battles. We walk the Path together. Our Disciples and Adepts, they still fight and hate. But they can learn. All beings can realize enlightenment.

Nile: Yow. So now do you go out and kick Technocratic butt?

Marsh: Of course there's the Technocracy to dismantle, but I really worry about the Fallen Ones. They've made tremendous inroads these last two or three decades, and no one seems to notice.

Dante: Hmm. Can't say I've noticed it, anyway. I do want to ask what you know about this supposed test new recruits are supposed to take. Did you take it?

Marsh: [Smiled.] It's not a test, just a little presentation. A conversation piece, that's all. It can be anything you want. I did a couple of things. First, this little trick where I put flour and sugar and whole eggs and a chocolate bar into a Bundt cake mold, then turned them into a cake. It was all probability manipulation, of course, plus a bit of Matter and Forces, but I presented it as a stage conjurer, with a wand and "Abracadabra" and "Presto-change-o!" It was a laugh.

Phuttaisong: Also good cake. Yum-yum! [Laughter.]

Marsh: And then I tried to instill a happy thought about how I hoped we could all work together in peace and harmony. Although it's generally bad form among the Euthanatos to influence the thoughts of others without serious purpose, it seemed appropriate in this case.

Nile: Can't argue with that. And what about you, Master? Did you show some cool martial-arts maneuvers?

Phuttaisong: [Laughter.] No, I perform tea ceremony. Very beautiful. For your ceremony, Dante, you act with sincere — [Looked at Marsh. Presumed telepathic communication.] — intent, without concern for ambition or praise, to evoke peace and wonder in all witnesses.

Dante: Sounds good. Well, we'll let you get back to your game. [Looked at board.] Never got into Go myself, although I've got a good program.

Phuttaisong: Go is great game of Asia. You give way to opponent's strength, strike where he is weak, build breathing spaces to be alive. Trap enemy, give and take.



Marsh: Which is fine, when it's all abstract. But we must never forget that it's just a game.

[They smiled. Dante and Nile nodded and left the teahouse. They walked back to the entrance on the flag-stone path.]

Nile: Everyone here has been really cool, you know?

Dante: [Under his breath.] I'm starting to believe this may actually work.

[Conversation ended 15:04. Next observation at entrance to Hermetic domain. Transcript follows in next dispatch.]

Scene 6: Crisp Calligraphy

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.6

LOCATION: HERMETIC SUBREALM GATEWAY

TIME: 15:07

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE and NILE approached entrance. Doorway is held by twin oak doors inlaid with gold warding glyphs based on P. Tetramagestus' fourth variant (1442) of the Hieratic Convolutions of Aron-hotep (presumed XVI Dynasty). For reference, these doors are modeled on those to the 12th Subsidiary Treasury at the end of Erasmus Concourse in Doissetep's Old Northeast wing, four doors down from cabal headquarters.]

[At doorway Dante and Nile encountered Order mage GETULIO VARGAS SAO CRISTAVAO (First Master, Bold Searchers cabal, Chantry Relampago, Rio de Janiero), who was crouched inscribing additional glyphs around door jamb. Physical description of Master Sao Cristavao omitted by courtesy; consult Personnel Division for dossier. Four acolytes guarded Master Sao Cristavao. Subrealm sphinx guardian Croesius absent, presumably at Cristavao's request.]

Dante: Nice work.

Nile: Wow, look how neatly he's painting those symbols. I guess I probably shouldn't ask what they're for, should I? What alphabet is that?

Dante: No idea. But it's probably safe to ask him that.

Master Sao Cristavao: [Standing.] I do not speak English. You do speak Portuguese?

Nile: Uh, no. I'm still working on English. Maybe we oughtta get Rabbi Witz, Dante?

Dante: Portuguese. I know I've got Portuguese. [Typed on computer.] Mmm. Punjabi, Papuan, Pashto, Persian, Pilipino, Polish, Polynesian, here we go! Just gotta decompress it... Okay. Run Portuguese.

[Dante activated a translation program. For convenience Master Sao Cristavao's speech is rendered here in the translated English version. Original Portuguese follows in separate file.]

Master Sao Cristavao: My thanks. I have left my Stone of Tongues within the Sanctum for protection.



Dante: Hmm. There it is again.

Nile: What?

Dante: Nothing. [Typed on computer.] No, nothing.

Nile: [To Master Sao Cristavao.] My name's Nile, and this is Dante. Master Porthos invited us. What alphabet is that?

Master Sao Cristavao: The nature of these characters is revealed only to initiates upon achievement of the Third Apprentice Degree.

Nile: Ah. Not available at my clearance. You're with the Order of Hermes, right?

Master Sao Cristavao: For the past 53 years I have had the high honor of occupying the Council Seat of Forces, as heir to an illustrious history dating from Masters Baldric LaSalle and Louis DuMonte, Hermes bani House Quaesitor, down to my immediate predecessor, the late First Master Liao Caoequin of Auspicious Heron Chantry, Shanghai. It is an honor to meet the famed Master of the Virtual Adepts, Master Dante.

Dante: Just "Dante" is fine, thanks.

Master Sao Cristavao: And you, young lady, would be the Orphan Mary Elizabeth Frances Wentworth, of New York City?

Nile: I'm not an Orphan! Like I said, my name's Nile. I'm with the Hollow Ones — the Tribe in Greenwich Village. Man, do you guys keep dossiers on everybody?

Master Sao Cristavao: [Chuckles.] "Hollow Ones," spoken as though it were an actual Tradition. Well, I imagine all the actual Traditions began with just such charming fits and starts.

Dante: Listen—!

Dante: [Quickly.] And you, sir, your name is—?

Master Sao Cristavao: I am First Master Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao of Chantry Relampago, at your service.

Nile: "Getulio Vargas." What an — interesting — name.

Master Sao Cristavao: Yes. Though of course his fame has not spread to America, Getulio Vargas was —

Nile: — president of Brazil during the Depression and World War II. Power-hungry dictator over a corrupt regime. It just surprised me to meet anyone named after him. Kind of like meeting someone named Benito Mussolini Jones, you know?

Dante: Nile!

Master Sao Cristavao: President Vargas was a great servant of his people, a force for reform against the greedy landowners and American big business. It is perhaps not surprising that the American view of his legitimately elected government has been distorted. I must say, it does surprise me that Miss Wentworth —

Nile: I'd appreciate it if you'd call me—!

Master Sao Cristavao: — displays knowledge of my country's history, when so many of her kind border on illiteracy.

Nile: [Loudly.] My "kind," meaning what?

Master Sao Cristavao: I mean, of course, American youth.

Nile: Piss off. [Left at speed. Documentation of subject Nile's movements before rejoining Dante to follow.]

Master Sao Cristavao: Curious. The dossier says that Miss Wentworth's skill in the Life Sphere should obviate such needs.

Dante: The last thing I expected in Horizon was an argument over Sleeper politics.

Master Sao Cristavao: Indeed. As if I could be "named after" a man some 300 years my junior. Am I correct in assuming that you, like many among the Virtual Adepts, have little interest in politics?

Dante: More like none. Whereas I hear it's mother's milk to the Order.

Master Sao Cristavao: Ah, too true. At times I fearfully believe that I gained this high Council seat not by ability and perception — at least not solely by them — but primarily because I was the least objectionable choice. Traditionally, you know, the Hermetic seat in Horizon has gone to the First Master of some otherwise obscure Chantry — much in the same way that the position of United Nations Secretary General goes to a dignitary from a small and unthreatening nation, such as Burma or Denmark.

Dante: If the Order was looking for the least objectionable choice, it should have looked harder. I only stuck around after Nile left to say I think you're rude even for a Hermetic, and you've got a major stick up your butt. [Turned to leave.]

Master Sao Cristavao: I see that even the renowned Dante has no more political skill than other Virtual Adepts. Perhaps if you had, you'd know the reason why Master Porthos invited you here.

Dante: [Stopped.] And that is?

Master Sao Cristavao: Dante, Dante. Master Porthos maintains an increasingly precarious position of authority in Chantry Doissetep. As rival Masters chafe under his rule, Porthos seeks new allies to shore up his own strength and detract from theirs.

Meanwhile, some among Charlotte Quay's pagan subordinates resent her quixotic quest to turn Horizon into a launching base for foredoomed missions against the Technocracy. These underlings have privately confided to me, and to others in the Order, that new, saner leaders from other Traditions would help temper her extreme views. So they have been quietly cooperating with Master Porthos.

For different reasons, certain factions of the Akashic Brotherhood and the Euthanatos — factions that, I must stress, exist outside of Doissetep — support Porthos' recruitment of the Masters Marsh and Phuttaisong. The two Traditions' longtime rivalry has obstructed their growth, which pleases the Hermetic leadership in Doissetep. By taking steps to heal the breach, these factions frustrate the premier Chantry's wishes.

Dante: I still haven't heard why I'm here.

Master Sao Cristavao: Given what I have said, is it not obvious? The Adepts are, of all the Traditions, perhaps least respectful of Doissetep's authority. You are possibly the most influential Adept. If you throw your weight behind Master Porthos' vision of Horizon, you can lure other Adepts to support his new power base, giving him followers resistant to Doissetep's subversion.

Dante: So all this is just one more power game, huh? Like all the rest that have made Horizon a joke for 500 years.

Master Sao Cristavao: If you wish to put it that way, yes.

Dante: And you're only telling me this out of the goodness of your heart, right? What do you hope I'll do?

Master Sao Cristavao: I think my hopes are irrelevant to what choice you'll make. I tell you all this because I think you wish to resist manipulation by others.

[Subject Dante laughed harshly and began walking away.]

Master Sao Cristavao: [Continued] I have one more bit of information you may find useful.

Dante: Not interested! [Continued walking.]

Master Sao Cristavao: [Loudly.] Master Porthos owned slaves.

[Subject Dante stopped and returned.]

Dante: What?

Master Sao Cristavao: As you know, Master Porthos is quite old. He does not speak of it today, but in the 18th and 19th centuries, in the American states of North Carolina and Tennessee, Porthos maintained large plantations that concealed

and guarded two private Nodes. The Technocracy, or the Order of Reason as it was then known, seized both Nodes during your Civil War. Porthos has not owned slaves since then, to my knowledge, but he has never publicly repented the practice. I tell you because you, in particular, might wish to know —

Dante: I know why you told me. [Pause.] Considering you've got all those dossiers, you don't know me very well. Or Adepts in general. When the meat isn't important, the color isn't either. Get me?

Master Sao Cristavao: History is always important, Master Dante.

Dante: [Walked away at speed. Under his breath:] I knew this set-up was too good to be true.

[Conversation ended 15:10. Next observation in Etherite domain laboratory. Transcript follows in next dispatch.]

Scene 7: Gastropod Glamour

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.7

LOCATION: ETHERITE LABORATORY
SUBREALM GATEWAY

TIME: 15:12

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subject DANTE passed electrodes at entrance to Sons of Ether laboratory subrealm. Entrance to laboratory has



been recently remodeled. Previous walnut-paneled door with brass fittings has been replaced by a foot-thick steel vault door with telepathic lock mechanism (thought-key still unknown). Full description to follow in later Dispatch.

[Vault door was open. Dante seemed about to go on, but then happened to look in, entered and stopped in anteroom. As before, this is patterned after a Victorian smoking room, with Morris chairs, love seats, and lounge chairs upholstered in Moroccan patterns; cherrywood sideboard tables and cellarettes; walnut paneling, Tiffany lamps, girandole mirrors, and Persian rugs. For full description, see Dispatch 1895.11.14.1.]

[Here Dante met subject **MARIANNA** (Master, Cult). Physical description of Marianna changes at approximately bi-weekly intervals (see Dispatch 1986.05.01.1). During this observation: Filipina female, 5' 2", 110 lbs., apparent age 22. Black hair with silver streak, black eyes, arching eyebrows, round face, snub nose, full lips. Thin build. Wore high-waisted, long-skirted pink dress in Philippine style, with white embroidery at waist. Barefoot. Insouciant manner.]

Marianna: [Gasped in delight.] Dante! Sweet love, how are you?

Dante: Marianna. Right?

[Subjects embraced warmly. Former intimacy conjectured based on ensuing conversation.]

Dante: Great to see you. That's a good look for you.

Marianna: Yeah! [Spun around.] And I have some Philippine tattoos, too. I'll show you later. So what've you been doing, sweet cheeks?

Dante: Today? Dangling on Porthos's strings. Does he want to make you a Council member, too?

Marianna: Dear heart, he doesn't have to. I'm the actual legitimate warm body in the Ecstatic seat. Have been for years, since not long after we were an "us."

Dante: I didn't know that! Why didn't you say so? What happened to what's-his-name?

Marianna: Ahem. Beloved Dante — to whom I am of course your Beatrice — you haven't actually forgotten Jaime Caliente.

Dante: Right! Jimmy Hot. Sorry. Guess I was blocking his name, out of sheer jealousy that he took you away.

Marianna: [Laughed.] Dante, you flirt. No one ever takes me away, because I'm still with everyone. Jaime's down in Haiti, which is even messier than ever, if you can believe it. Vampire trouble, voodoo frauds, not to mention the political chaos. Someone's stirring the pot with a spatula, if you know what I mean. Jaime's vowed not to leave until he personally sees it straightened out — which is our Jimmy all over, I'm afraid. Anyway, he fingered me as the new Council rep when he left, but I don't yet feel as if I've accomplished what I set out to do — expand the rickety minds on the Council without getting bogged down in their beauracracy.

Truth to tell, I didn't want it spread around that I had the chair. People would have come to me to, I don't know, fix their Paradox tickets. I deal with enough administrative drivel at Chantry Balador.

[This version of Marianna's ascendancy, though entertaining, is at odds with current reports. According to our records (Dispatches 1976.7.10.1, 1978.5.14.2), Marianna has held the seat since taking over leadership of Balador Chantry in 1976. Given this Master's propensity for shape-changing and the Cult's reputation for misinformation and disorganization, all reports concerning each are suspect.]

Dante: So why are you still here?

Marianna: Well, you know... Porthos at least made me curious, I'll give him that. I'm starting to feel a kind of vibe. You sense it?

Dante: It's a fake. I talked with the Hermetic back there. It's Porthos doing more puppet games. Or maybe Master Getulio Sao Tight-Sphincter, one or the other.

Marianna: Oh, we believe Hermetics nowadays, do we? Seems like listening to them is what's kept this overblown embassy tied up for five centuries. So tell me about your marvelous new find, love.

Dante: Find?

Marianna: Nile! I just met her. She came into the lab, saw me, and within 15 seconds, she was telling me all about the Philippines and President Raoul Magsaysay. What a live wire! This place could use 10 like her. You did good. [Pause.] Dante dear, your next line is, "I sure did, Marianna, you're right as always."

Dante: [Sigh.] I wish I had that script.

Marianna: Oh dear. You haven't spoiled this beautiful affair over some stupid argument about whether we need bodies, have you?

Dante: Great! Now I'm predictable.

Marianna: [Kissed him lightly.] Oh honey, you always could be such a jerk. You know, you Adepts talk a lot of anarchy, but every one of you always seems to follow his own rules.

[Crackle of electricity and smell of ozone from beyond inside door leading to laboratory.]

Dante: What's that?

Marianna: Oh, oh! She must be ready! You have to see this.

Dante: See what? Say, where is this, anyway? Looks like Ether territory.

Marianna: Right. Alexis Hastings is putting together a new experiment. Tom Smithson's here, too.

Dante: Alexis is here? Old Home Week. Haven't met Smithson, though. What's Lady Lex working on?

Marianna: **Dante**, I've done things they don't have words for in the Oxford dictionary, but this — I can't begin. Trust me.

[Marianna led Dante into an Etherite laboratory. Physical description, which changes often, summarized here for reference. For most recent full description see Dispatch 1995.12.11.1.

[Enormous white temperature-controlled room with many long tables filled with scientific equipment of every kind. Smoke detectors and halon extinguishing systems on fireproof ceiling every 10 feet. Separate cells configurable for different atmospheres, temperature, magnetic fields and gravity. At far end of room, a tevatron and three portable fusion generators. Concrete floors, odors of formaldehyde and ozone, constant low hum.

[Subjects **NILE** and **TOM SMITHSON** (Master, Dream) stood around a large wooden scaffold 10 feet tall (identified below).]

Nile: Dante! C'mere, you won't believe this!

Dante: What is this thing?

Nile: This is Scientist Hastings' authentic replica, with major improvements, of the original 1850 snail-telegraph!

Dante: [Pause.] The what?

Nile: Lookit, we've been reading about it in this newspaper article she showed us.

[Nile handed Dante a photocopy of an article by M. Jules Allix, dated 10/27/1850, from the respected Paris newspaper *Presse*. Operative Fenaes has since authenticated the article after consulting the Doissetep archives. Relevant extracts reproduced here:

"A French inventor, M. Jacques Toussaint Benoit (de l'Hérault) and a fellow worker of Gallic origin living in America, M. Biat-Chretien, have hit upon a new system of universal intercommunication of thought, which operates instantaneously.... [T]he base of communication is a sort of special sympathetic fluid composed of the union or blending of the galvanic, magnetic, and sympathetic currents..."

"The forces or fluids here married are: (a) The terrestrial-galvanic current, (b) the animal-sympathetic current, in this case derived from *snails*, (c) the adamic or human current, or animal-magnetic current in man. Consequently, to describe concisely the basis of the new system of intercommunication, we shall have to call the force, 'The galvano-terrestrial-magnetic-animal and adamic force!'"

[Apparatus comprised a large box holding a 2' wooden disk covered with felt, rotating horizontally on a steel axle; attached to its perimeter, 26 spring-mounted zinc cups, each 2" in diameter, lined with cloth soaked in cupric sulfate, held in place by a riveted copper strip, and assigned a letter from A to Z; also miscellaneous wires and coils, all attached to a small generator wired with capacitors. In each cup, a live snail, conjectured (based on ensuing dialogue) to be confined there through Smithson's use of Life Effects. Image to follow.]

Dante: [Reading.] Snails?

Marianna: I told you I couldn't explain it.

Smithson: That's why I'm here, to keep the snails in line. Now I guess I'll get to go back to my land and add to my titles, "Wrangler of Snails."

[Physical description of **SMITHSON** summarized here. For full description see Dispatch 1989.06.17.1.]

[SMITHSON: Amerind male (Apache), 5'11", 160 lbs., apparent age 58. Long gray-streaked black hair gathered in ponytail, brown eyes, heavily wrinkled skin (believed to be a Paradox Flaw). Plaid long-sleeved ranch shirt, bolo tie, denim jeans, leather sandals. Affable, dignified yet sardonic manner.]

Dante: You're Tom Smithson? Pleased to meet you. [Shook hands.]

Smithson: I've admired you ever since you made that run on Null-B in 1985, Master Dante. An honor.

Dante: Do you hold the Dreamspeaker seat on the Council, or were you brought in by Porthos like us?

Smithson: A little of both, really. My people don't care about the Council one way or the other. Half the time we don't even think of ourselves as a Tradition, you know, not in the same sense you folks do. The Europeans concocted the whole thing. We're just the odd mages out.

Nile: Hey, I thought my bunch was the odd ones out.

Smithson: [Smiled.] We'll have to compare histories. I ended up in the seat a few years back because I was about the only one interested. I think Master Porthos accepts that, just because he probably doesn't know many other medicine men.

Marianna: Don't believe it, Tom. You'd be surprised who and what Porthos knows.

Dante: You lobbied for a big assault on Null-B, right? You were a prisoner there.

Smithson: 62 years and four months, April 1884 to August 1946. I've been out this long, and I still haven't got over it. You were there. You know.

Dante: I was there about three minutes, but yeah. I know what you mean.

[Music from a wall speaker: Wagner's *Tannhäuser* overture.]

Nile: Sounds like she finally found the music she wanted.

Marianna: Alexis favors momentous music for momentous occasions.

[Here subject **ALEXIS HASTINGS** (Master, Etherites) entered from side office. Physical description summarized for reference. For full description, see Dispatch 1988.06.21.4.]

[HASTINGS: Caucasian female (British-Welsh), 5'7", 135 lbs., age 43. Black hair, blue eyes, thin eyebrows, narrow nose, pale complexion. Sturdy build. High-necked, double-breasted gray combat jacket, white fascia belt, gray stretch pants, white knee boots. Enthusiastic manner.]

Hastings: All right, all right, I believe we're on the way to greatness. Cupric sulfate in a solution of balsamic ether! This may be uncomfortable for the snails, but I trust that



Master Smithson will let me know if things get too bad. Generators online! Capacitors fully charged! We have — ah, we have a new visitor. [To Dante.] Hello, I'm Alexis Hastings. [Offered hand.]

Dante: Lex — it's me, Dante. We've met. Twice.

Hastings: Really? Marvelous! Whoop, I see a loose corner on the felt under that bowl. Now I'll need some glue. Sorry, Master Dante, I'm afraid I have the worst memory for — Glue, glue, it's somewhere around here. Excuse me, Miss Nile, it's over by your hand. [Nile handed her a tube of glue.] Thank you. —for faces. [To Dante.] Do you know the nature of this experiment?

Dante: Communicating with, uh, snails.

Hastings: Not with snails, *through* them, and through the sub-etheric force grid that underlies the entire Tellurian! As that article points out, "snails which have once been put in contact, are always in sympathetic communication. When separated, there disengages itself from them a species of fluid of which the earth is the conductor, which develops and unrolls, so to speak, like the almost invisible thread of the spider, or that of the silk worm, which can be uncoiled and prolonged almost indefinitely in space without its breaking, but with this vital difference, that the thread of the escargotic fluid is invisible as completely and the pulsation along it as rapid as the electric fluid."

Dante: You know, this morning when I was considering what might happen today at Horizon, *never once* did I think —

Hastings: That, sir, is why you're not a Scientist. Where's my analyzer?

Dante: I assume the reason we haven't heard of this thing since 18 — when was it? — is that it doesn't work.

Hastings: Oh, of course it didn't work! That Benoit person was a complete charlatan. Ah, the voltage readings look fine. Master Smithson, I'll want to consult with you if this succeeds, to learn whatever you know about this species of gastropod. He built a bogus telegraph purely to freeload off his landlord for a year. Heaven only knows how he duped that newspaper reporter. Never was a "Monsieur Biat" in America, as far as anyone knows. Snails are called "gastropods," aren't they? All right, almost there, I think. But he was a Sleeper, and so ignorant of the etheric substrate of reality. Then, too, I've only recently hit upon a theory of Quintessential energy, based on a deep layer of continual ferment under the ether — Yes, that's right. Gastropods. —That every living being is inextricably and perhaps ineluctably connected to — a version of "soul energy," if you will. If true, it promises to open whole new realms of power generation and, as we may find here; communication! Master Smithson, if you please: my goggles! [Took goggles.]

Nile: [Took Dante's arm.] Isn't this great?

Dante: [Dazed.] Yeah, great. [Pause.] Actually, come to think of it, this is pretty great.

Nile: I love this place. Look how clean it is!

Dante: Alexis, did Porthos invite you here?

Hastings: Yes — arrh, that snail is crawling out of its bowl, Master Smithson, please keep it in line! — although I've been living here since I helped Dr. Spence, our Ether Council member, formulate the Cohesion Theory for the last Council meeting, back in '88. Dr. Bridges — the *Paradigma* editor, do you know him? — was scheduled to attend, but two days beforehand he was called away to the Hollow World. [Inspected snails with an Etheroscopic Analyzer.] You see here, look, the voltaic potential is in slight disequilibrium. Simple chaotic fluctuation? Hah, I think not! So Dr. Bridges' Laboratory and certain other interested parties — I don't recall who — decided to reappoint Dr. Spence in his place. Aha! I've an idea. Dr. Spence was a nervous wreck — brilliant man, but no aspirations toward leadership. Dr. Bridges, by the way, had received a message from the Golden Eagle Pylon in Agarta, to the effect that the sun was fading. They wanted him to seek an audience with the Emperor of Agarta. He vanished shortly after arrival in the Hollow World, and I'm sorry to say that despite repeated expeditions, no one has found him yet, although knowing him, I'm sure he's not in real danger. I knew it! Yes, it's a definite imbalance. In any event, Dr. Spence had no reason to be nervous. Only two others besides him even bothered to show up. Now that I think of it, I imagine Agarta is probably a nice place to end up stranded. The sun hasn't faded, last I heard. Has anyone here ever been there? But I'm getting off the subject. There was Charlotte Quay — lovely woman, and her children were delightful — that's a pity about them. How terrible to think of them in that place! I'll take

Agarta any day, or even Horizon. Now — now — all right, I suspect these cupric sulfate crystals will raise the imbalance to the necessary level, although dosage will be critical to avoid toxicity to the snails. — Although I must say that I've never been to MECHA. I have no desire to go, either! And the other was that Hermetic fellow, San Cristobal or whatever. He makes my skin crawl, I don't mind saying. Horizon's potential has been wasted, if you ask me. Fewer politics and more action, that's what we need! If this connection goes through, my friends, it may be an historic beginning — wish me luck! So! At any rate, I suppose Dr. Spence, with his years and years of expertise, was a good choice to occupy the Etherite seat once, although naturally I'm flattered that Master Porthos evidently thinks well enough of me to replace Dr. Spence. And I think Spence would be grateful to abdicate his seat and get back to full-time experimentation. Could you throw that switch, please? Here goes. Aha! Ah, yes, I believe this is very promising. Look how the snail quivers! Ladies and gentlemen, I believe we may be connecting with the underlying etheric force-grid! [To Nile.] Don't you agree, Ms. Nile?

Nile: Me? I wouldn't know the etheric force-grid from the transporter in *Star Trek*.

Hastings: No, I was asking if you agree that Horizon's potential has been wasted.

Nile: Oh. You lost me three conversations back. [Laughter.]

Dante: So, did it work? I didn't see the snails do anything.



Hastings: Naturally not, inasmuch as I haven't built the receiving telegraph. One step at a time, Master Dante. When the corresponding receiver exists, you'll see these snails extend their horns to touch the letters on their cups, spurred by the revulsion from cupric sulfate, and in perfect synchrony their counterparts at the other end will spell out the message we send here. But today's work has satisfied me extremely. Master Smithson, if you would be so good as to return these tractable snails to their habitat, we will resume on another day. Now if you'll excuse me, I must go jot down my observations for *Paradigma*. Lovely to meet you, Master Dante. Again. Ta!

[Hastings returned to side office. Smithson began gathering snails in a bowl. Nile crossed to a stool and sat down.]

Dante: [To Marianna.] Snails.

Marianna: In touch with the ether, and tasty too.

Dante: I like Lex fine. I have to admit I'm having trouble picturing her on the Council, involved in delicate negotiations or something.

Marianna: You haven't seen her in "social mode." When she isn't running an experiment, she's quite shy—not as bad as Spence, but more even-tempered.

Smithson: Master Hastings has good ideas. She's been arguing for a cross-Tradition ambassador program.

Dante: "Ambassador program"?

Marianna: The Traditions are all on the same side, in theory, and yet we've been keeping secrets from each other for centuries. You Awaken into a Tradition, stay in it forever and learn to distrust the others. We all went through that ourselves, right?

Nile: [Snorted.] Dante's still going through that!

Marianna: Well, the Adepts do have chips surgically attached to their shoulders. But if the other Traditions had treated them with anything like kindness, or the Hollow Ones for that matter, maybe it wouldn't be like that.

Smithson: Or, since you can't expect "kindness" in this world, they might have got the same result by initiating a few Adepts into their own Traditions. That's the ambassador idea.

Nile: You mean, mages who are already well along in one Tradition would join another and, what, start over?

Marianna: That's it, more or less. You'd go to another Chantry, join the Tradition cabal that invited you, and learn the philosophy, the attitudes, without constant "mine's bigger than yours" bickering. Go through the apprenticeship, maybe a year or two, then return to your own Tradition and tell everyone about it. If the Akashics and the Euthanatos had only done that a thousand years ago —

Smithson: If you all had only sat in a sweat lodge!

Marianna, Dante, Nile: [Together.] I have.

Smithson: Oh. I mean, if the usual run of Tradition mages had experienced the shamanic paths, maybe they would listen to us more often. And, of course, if the natives had adapted a little more smoothly to your ways, we'd be in better shape.

Dante: Well, the Virtual Adepts explicitly state that anyone can become an Adept. If he's elite enough.

Nile: There's an attractive come-on.

Marianna: The problem won't be finding Tradition cabals who are willing to teach outsiders—except the Hermetics, and maybe the Verbena. More likely, we won't find Adepts, let alone Masters, who want to become students again and learn from mentors they automatically regard as misguided.

Nile: Yeah, and who'd want to be an ambassador to the Euthanatos, where the first thing you do is die!

Marianna: Actually, Nile, you'd be ideal as our first ambassador.

Dante: You're kidding.

Nile: [Pause.] Me? Why?

Smithson: We were talking about this. The Hollow Ones are obvious ambassadors. You're not affiliated with any Tradition —

Nile: Like hell! We are a Tradition!

Smithson: Sorry. I mean, the other Traditions would regard you as neutrals, not spies.

Marianna: And we'd need someone who could bring a sense of wonder to whatever she learned, whatever lessons she carried back to the other Traditions. You have that wonder, Nile. I saw it in your eyes, watching Lex work her telegraph. You're a wonderful person.

Nile: [Quietly.] Thank you.

Marianna: Do you think I'm right, Dante?

Dante: [Long pause.] Yeah. I sure do, Marianna. You're right as always.

[Nile stood and walked to Dante. They embraced. Long pause.]

Marianna: Of course, the ambassadors are only a first step. We have some other ideas, like an alert system. Cabals in distress could call some central dispatch and request immediate help.

Dante: 911 for mages. That could work through the Digital Web.

Nile: You sound like you're sold, Dante.

Dante: [Pause.] Well, not entirely. Those Order of Hermes bastards are still a problem.

Smithson: If you mean Sao Cristavao, it looks like Porthos has a way past him. Has Porthos brought in the new Hermetic yet?

Dante: Another Hermetic? How could he put a new one in the seat Sao Cristavao already holds?

Smithson: [Pause.] Hnnh. A little friend of mine has just whispered in my ear. Porthos is back. Want to watch the fun?

[All subjects returned to the Council Chamber, 15:25. Transcript of observations follows in next dispatch.]

Scene 8: Criminal Conference

URGENT URGENT URGENT URGENT
FROM OPERATIVE JG, HORIZON
TO CABAL MASTER — EYES ONLY

PRIORITY ALERT: Since previous dispatch, I have learned that Master Porthos has formed an alliance with Interdicted Disciple MARK HALLWARD GILLAN. Porthos means to establish Gillan in the Forces Council seat in place of Master Sao Cristavao, and thereby foment debilitating civil battle within the Order. Also, grave accusations of Master Thrun. Alert Sha'ir posthaste.

Transcript follows:

DISPATCH 1996.01.14.8

LOCATION: HORIZON COUNCIL CHAMBER

TIME: 15:26

OPERATIVE: JG

[Subjects DANTE, MARIANNA, NILE and TOM SMITHSON entered Council Chamber from Etherite Laboratory. There they met MASTER PORTHOS.]

Master Porthos: Ah, I see you've been getting acquainted, Master Dante. Good good good. I've brought back a mage who wants to meet all of you, and he has many interesting things to say.

Dante: [Looked around.] Where is he?

Gillan: 'Lo. My name's Gillan.

[Here subject **MARK HALLWARD GILLAN** (Disciple, Order, exiled) was detected slouched in the Forces chair at the Table Cenacle. Surveillance apparatus did not mark Gillan's presence until he spoke. Speculation about reasons to follow. Physical description summarized here. For full description consult Personnel Division, "Traitors" file.]

GILLAN: White male (Australian), 5'10", 150 lbs., age 39, apparent age early 30s. Blond hair, black eyebrows, black eyes, strong features, sturdy build. Wore white wool turtleneck sweater, black pants, black wingtip shoes, gray trenchcoat. Unflappable, cynical manner.]

Gillan: [Stood up.] I know most of you by reputation. Don't know if you ever heard of me. Had a little blowout with the Order of Hermes a few years back, and they let me go.

Marianna: "Let you go?" The Order?

Gillan: Well, they ordered me killed, and posted a big Tass reward no-questions-asked, but apart from that it was amicable. [Held up crossed fingers.] Me and Salman Rushdie, we're like that.

Dante: You want to tell us why, Master — Gillan? Or do we use the Socratic method?

Gillan: Ah, you're the Virtual Adept. Somehow I guessed that. Well, chief, it started four years ago when I was taking the airs in Cape Town. Started tracking a serial killer, just for laughs. He'd killed about nine children, but this was in the

black townships on the Cape Flats, and the white police were having none of it. Wound up tracing him to, guess where, a Euthanatos Chantry. Or as they call it, a Marabout.

Master Porthos: I believe at this point we should call in Master Marsh. She'll want to hear this.

Gillan: You're dead wrong there, chief, but go ahead.

[Subject **AGATHA MARSH** entered from Euthanatos subrealm. Marsh showed no sign of recognizing Gillan.]

Gillan: As I was saying, this Euthanatos serial killer was living square in the heart of Cape Town's posh city center, on Darling Street in sight of the Castle. A fellow name of Richard Somnitz, part of a cabal called the Friends of the Soul.

Marsh: What? Who are —? Is this Mark Hallward Gillan?

Master Porthos: You know the nature of his accusations, then.

Marsh: I should say so. He was a Hermetic mage who taunted an Umbrood and was driven mad. He reported his paranoid delusions to the Order, and they made a full investigation. They found nothing. The Order ousted him, but since then, he's been troubling everyone with irresponsible tirades about one of the most reputable Chantries in our Tradition.

Gillan: So goes the story, anyway. Trouble is, I have evidence.

Smithson: Evidence of what?

Gillan: Of —

Marsh: Please, don't bother. Mr. Gillan claims that two Euthanatos Marabouts in Cape Town and Miami engage in torture, sadistic murder and atrocities, in service to some unspecified evil power called "the Grand Harvester." As though that weren't enough, he accused these Chantries of making a Node from the site of the Nazi death camp Dachau, a vile and odious slander.

Gillan: [Threw two manila folders on the Table Cenacle before Marsh.] "Vile" and "odious" are two of the words I'd use, too. Read 'em and weep.

[Marsh took up a folder and read. Looked shocked.]

Dante: What's in the folders?

Gillan: I never claim what I can't back up. That's the smoking gun: four months of internal secret memos from the Ancestral Chantry of the Order of Hermes. And if you think it wasn't a bitch-kitty getting that crap, pardon my French, you can think again. The short form is, the Order's Grievance Committee ordered my accusations suppressed and the evidence destroyed. They drummed me out and wanted me killed because I knew too much. And care to guess who was the chief hatchet-man in all this? None other than that loyal Hermetic dipstick —

[From the Saxum Oculorum, the central crystal sphere surmounting the Table Cenacle, a sudden crackle of electricity and gathering of electric force. It lanced out toward

Gillan, but at the last moment diverted its path and struck harmlessly on Master Porthos. Master Porthos stood silently. Lightning crackled around him. His hair floated. Others near him, save for Gillan, shied back. As usual, Gillan never flinched.]

Master Sao Cristavao: Traitor!

[MASTER GETULIO VARGAS SAO CRISTAVAO entered from a hallway with four consors. For convenience, Master Sao Cristavao's words are given in English, as translated by his Stone of Tongues.]

Gillan: Wondered when you'd show up. Everybody, meet Master Hatchet. Or, if you prefer, Dipstick.

Master Sao Cristavao: You people! This man is a dangerous lunatic. His insanity has been shown time and again in the Order archives. You dare not heed his groundless prattle.

Dante, Marianna, Nile: [Aside to each other.] "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

Master Porthos: [Quietly.] Master Sao Cristavao, you risk much by attacking me in this fashion.

Master Sao Cristavao: I did not attack you, Master! I intended the bolt for the traitor. You must know that our own Order's Central Security Council has pronounced Requital on Gillan. You yourself risk the same fate by associating with him, let alone bringing him here!

Master Porthos: Ah, but you see, I had no choice. I am his captive.

Master Sao Cristavao: What? Ridiculous! This man Gillan is no more than a Disciple!

Master Porthos: Nevertheless, he struck from surprise and dominated me entirely. I grow weak in my old age, Master Sao Cristavao, and I had no choice but to obey his wishes. He wished to come here and take the Council seat. So I am blameless. Is that not correct, Mr. Gillan?

Gillan: That's right, mate, Porthos is under my thumb. Really, I'm an amazing fellow.

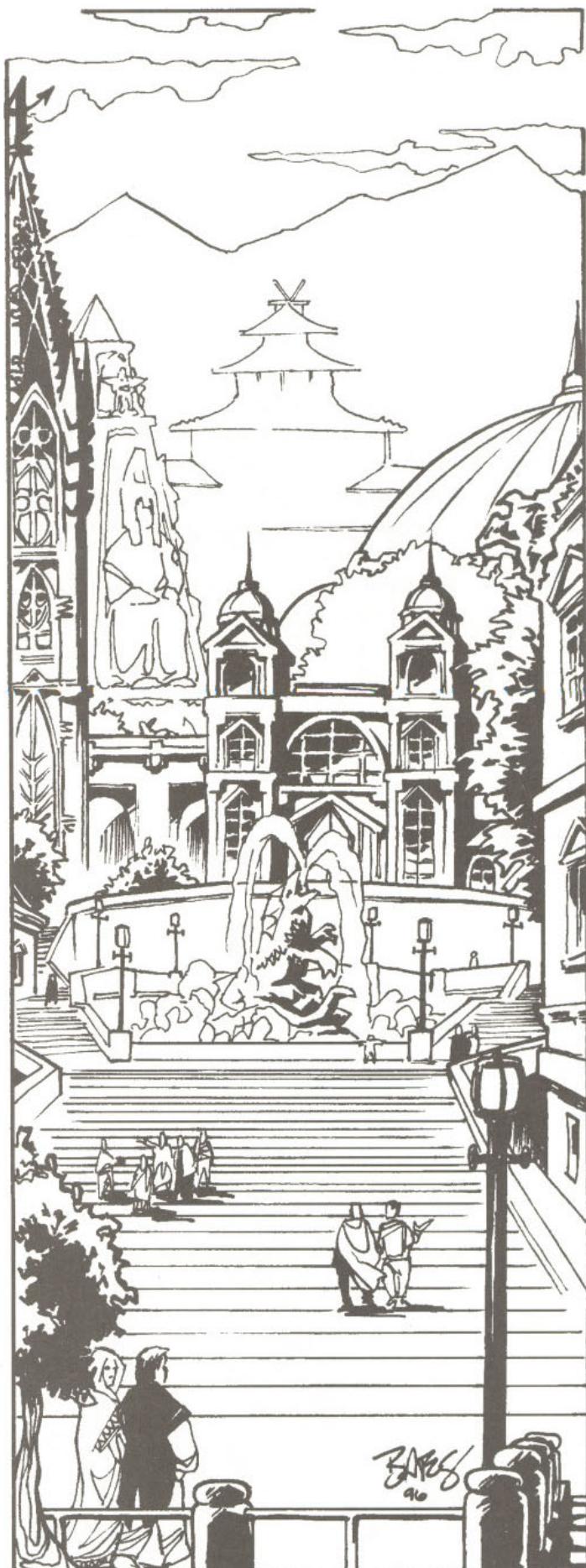
Master Sao Cristavao: [Cry of rage.] We shall see whether the Security Council believes this fairy tale! [Turned to leave. Consors followed, keeping eyes on Masters Porthos and Gillan.]

[Here Master Porthos sent the lightning around himself toward Master Sao Cristavao, trapping Cristavao in a cage of electricity. Four consors disappeared, presumably transported to another locale.]

Master Porthos: I suggest you remain here, Master. Having been trapped and forced to read Mr. Gillan's evidence, I now nurture grave concerns about your record prior to taking the Council seat.

Marsh: These records — they could be forged.

Gillan: Oh yeah, lady, I'll show forged papers to six Tradition Masters, when any one of 'em can detect any kind of forgery, any way you want, in seconds.



Master Porthos: Show a bit more civility to the lady, if you will, Mr. Gillan.

Gillan: Sorry. So assuming they're genuine — which they are, Master Marsh — you want to tell these kind folks what the papers say?

Marsh: It — it seems that Master Sao Cristavao, as a member of the Grievance Committee, influenced his fellow members to suppress Gillan's evidence —

Master Sao Cristavao: A lie! In any case, our proceedings took place behind closed doors, and we kept no records!

Gillan: You haven't been long in the Order if you think any word gets said in the Ancestral Hermetic Chantry without someone taking it down. They just didn't tell you.

Marsh: And these transcripts — records of telepathic communication between Sao Cristavao and the Euthanatos Master Walter Thrun, of the Glass Eye cabal of Doissetep.

Master Porthos: Ah. The Chantry's security forces. Quite an influential pack of allies for our Master Sao Cristavao.

Master Sao Cristavao: That — that is a self-evident forgery! Telepathic transcripts, indeed!

Gillan: Transcribed verbatim from the recollections of Umbrood Preceptor Helferna-Coron, guardian of the portals of Cal Ladeim, Lands of Thunder and Twilight. That's Doissetep's Realm, for those folks not in the know. Nothing telepathic gets in without Helferna's notice.

Smithson: Is that Helferna of the Nine Copper Legs? I've spoken with her. Actually, with one of her legs. She's known across the Umbra. Single-minded. Very honest.

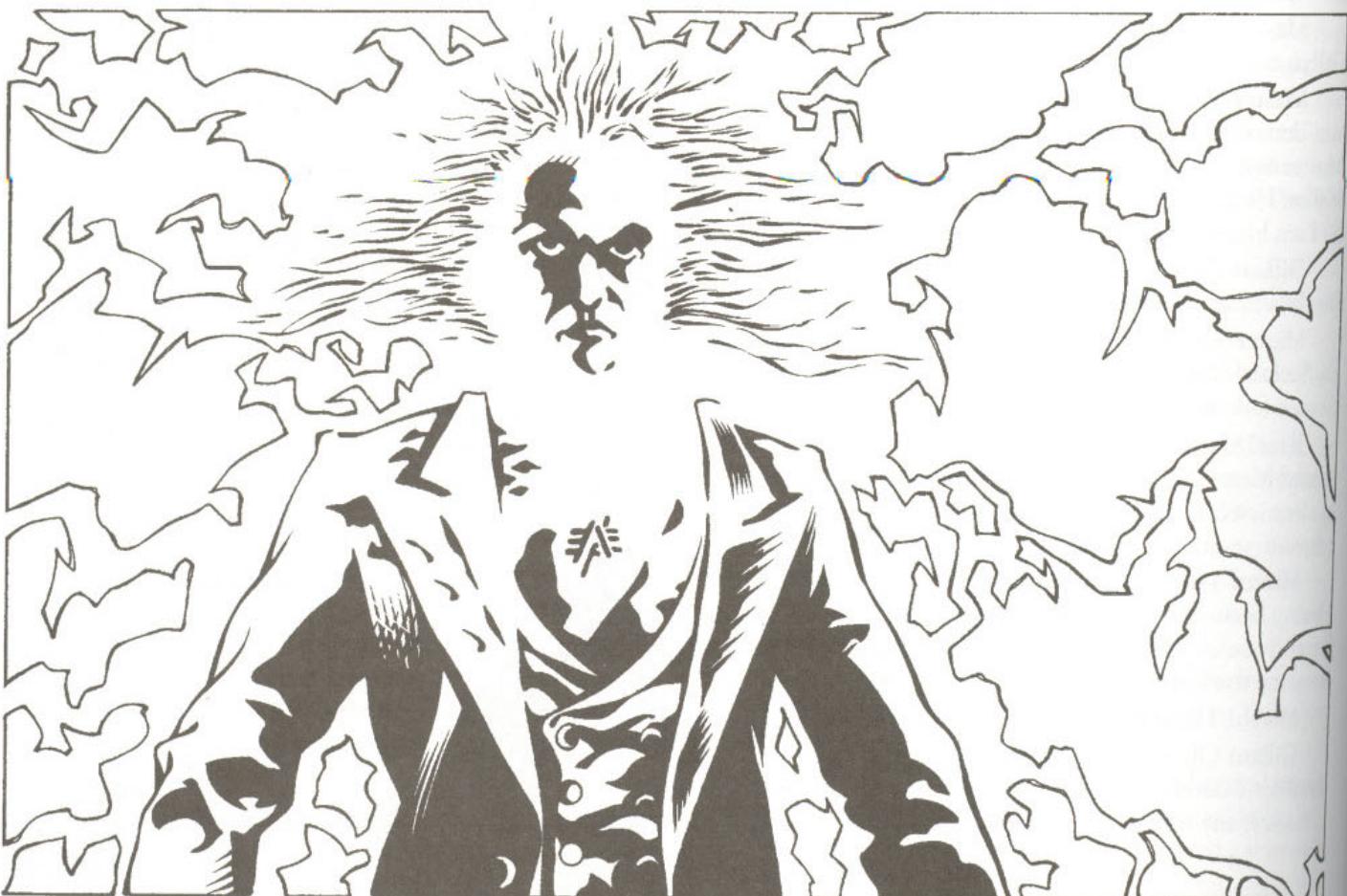
Master Sao Cristavao: Indeed! Who could believe that this stripling, Gillan, could hope even to locate Cal Ladeim, let alone coerce reminiscences from its guardian spirit?

Master Porthos: Well argued. Clearly Gillan has some hidden ally within Doissetep. [Walked slowly toward Master Sao Cristavao's cage.] Someone who wishes to disrupt its endless petty politicking, its hopeless Winter intrigues, its banal ambitions. Someone who thinks the holder of Horizon's Hermetic Council seat, a position of nobility and promise, should not be toady to the whims of one or another Chantry faction.

[Master Porthos walked through the lightning cage and stood directly before Master Sao Cristavao.]

Master Porthos: Hear the words of one who knows politics far better than you, Sao Cristavao. You're about to be thrown over. You picked a promising guardian in Master Thrun. Had you succeeded in concealing his involvement with this despicable Euthanatos Chantry — whatever that involvement may be — he would certainly have rewarded you, if and when the Glass Eye came to power.

But you failed. You are now dead weight. Thrun will exercise tremendous ingenuity in wriggling out of these accusations. I'm sure he'll succeed. But he'll desert you on



the instant. Alone, stained by scandal, you must resign your Council seat.

Master Sao Cristavao: Giving way to an exile? A mere Disciple? Do you honestly believe you can —

Master Porthos: Honesty is not high on my list of qualities, Sao Cristavao. But pragmatism is. Horizon must achieve success despite the Order of Hermes, not with its aid. Any mage who has achieved Mastery within the Order has already been suborned into its authoritarian and manipulative culture. Believe me, I know.

Gillan is an exile only until I persuade the Security Council to revoke its edict. I can be quite persuasive, when I put my fading mind to it.

Gillan: [Under his breath.] Don't suppose anyone allows that I might actually reach Mastery.

Master Sao Cristavao: You have — You are — This is —

Master Porthos: Elegantly put. I must meditate on these words. Meanwhile, I return you to your Chantry in Brazil — or at any rate, somewhere in that hemisphere. I am old, and my aim is not what it used to be.

[Here Master Porthos used a Correspondence Effect to transport Master Sao Cristavao from the Council Chamber.]

Marsh: If you care to sabotage your Order for the sake of politics, Master Porthos, that is not my concern. But with this maneuver you also throw the Euthanatos into turmoil.

Master Porthos: [Shrieked in sudden explosive rage. Moisture in air around Table Cenacle boiled away in steam-flashes.] You dare to complain? You, who have let this corruption fester unobserved within the body of your Tradition? Who have permitted a cabal to draw on the most depraved and despicable Node in the Tellurian, a source of unsurpassed evil that not even a Technocrat would touch? [Shouting.] I bring to light this atrocity, and you have the gall to complain?

[Pause.]

Gillan: How about a little more civility with the lady, if you don't mind, chief?

Dante, Nile, Marianna, Smithson: Shush!

Gillan: [Shrugged.] Tit for tat.

Master Porthos: You do have nerve, Mr. Gillan. I think the Council may benefit from nerve. It has not, so far, benefited from Mastery. Yet if anything can shatter your calm, I imagine heated argument with eight rival Tradition Masters can do it. Now I must return to Doissetep. Walter Thrun may feel pressed to take drastic steps unless I am there to moderate him. [Turned to leave, then turned back to Gillan.] Oh, yes. Will you now set me free, Mr. Gillan?

[Gillan waved him away. Master Porthos walked across the room, growing more transparent with each step, and finally vanished.]

Gillan: Well, that's that. Does this place have a kitchen? I'm ravenous.

Dante: You need food? Are you really just a Disciple, holding the Council seat of Forces?

Gillan: No worries. I'm a forceful guy. Which way to the grub?

Marsh: Mr. Gillan. By some standards I owe you an apology on behalf of my Tradition. But many who serve the Great Cycle will not look upon you as a friend. I must warn you that we make dangerous enemies.

Gillan: Just as you say. But I'm still hungry. [Walked casually down a hallway. In parting:] Nice place!

[This transcript ends here, 15:44, in order to expedite emergency transfer to Doissetep. Next dispatch continues transcript of ensuing conversation.]

Scene 9: GOOD GOVERNMENT

January 15th, 1996

TO: Deacon Caeron Mustai, Master, Janissaries
FROM: Porthos

Dear Caeron,

I think the enclosed transcript may interest you. It comes from Horizon Chantry, where (I'm told) the fine folk on the Council recently uncovered a spy. Wonder of wonders, it proved to be Galbrese, yes, hard to believe but in all truth our own Julianno Galbrese, from here in Doissetep! That is, as they say nowadays, one on us, don't you think? HA! HA! HA!

I intrude this note into your busy schedule because the underhanded felon Galbrese, in making parenthetical remarks to his unknown supervisor, I presume one or another of those Glass Eye people that I've never gotten on with especially well. No indeed not. Security for the Chantry is all well to the good, I think we're all agreed on that, but when security starts turning into, I almost want to say "paranoia," although the Oracles know many and many a person over the centuries has accused me of paranoia too. Tar with the same brush, eh? But I'm alive, if no longer necessarily in my prime, and most of them aren't, although there seem to be more every year.

The verminous turncoat Galbrese made reference to "Sha'ir." Now I know of no "Sha'ir" in the Glass Eye, although their secretive ways can conceal anything, a source of alarm to any right-thinking mage who wants only the best for our Chantry and our Tradition(s), although of course we must grant them a certain amount of discretion in order to prevent malfeasance. Although when they're also defining "malfeasance" as well as enforcing it! I darkly suspect that this "Sha'ir" pulling the deceiving agent Galbrese's strings is not in fact from

the Glass Eye, although who can doubt they have the skill and mendacity to commit such a crime? but in fact from some other cabal or agency within Doissetep. I cannot think of this "Sha'ir," but then I remembered that "sha'ir" is a Bedouin term for the nomadic poets who wrote panegyrics or invective or calls to war. "One who knows." Seer. Supernatural inspiration. And then I recalled that you are in fact, if I remember rightly, and in my old age I can hardly claim to do so. Being Bedouin yourself, or at least of that descent, perhaps you might offer suggestions, if you can find time in your crowded schedule, about the identity of "Sha'ir." I.E. whoever this *treacherous, subversive, FOREDOOMED BETRAYER!!!* may be.

If you can think of nothing (what an Akashic sentiment!), please accept my apologies for troubling you with this piffle, which obviously has no relevance to you. I fear I will only be guilty of yet more such breaches as I descend further into doddering senescence. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

- P -

Deacon Primus

DISPATCH 1996.01.14

LOCATION: HORIZON COUNCIL CHAMBER

TIME: 15:45

OPERATIVE: JG

(DEAR CAERON: The Horizon mages kindly sent me the entire final transcript that the traitorous puppet Galbrese compiled. He was evidently using some Virtual Adept-instigated mechanism that took down their words automatically as these were spoken, even to the moment the mages discovered him.

(Why did they send this document to me, you may ask? To which I answer, Who can read the intent of these inscrutable Horizon people?

(Rather than waste exorbitant amounts of your time, Caeron, I have taken the liberty of deleting over an hour of speculation, debate on strategy and other irrelevant trivia. Here follows the section where the insidious dupe Galbrese was discovered. —P.)

Quay: Well, it sounds like that's settled. Anything to add? Elihu? Agatha? What about you, Dante? You've been staring off into space for this whole bull session.

Nile: Not into space, into cyberspace.

Dante: That's right. I've been putting together a little demo program. You folks wanted to see a show, and I'm ready to give it.

Nile: "Hey kids, I've got a barn! And Judy can sing, and Mickey'll lead the band! It'll be great!"

Hastings: Um, is this actually the appropriate time? We are planning strategy, after all.

Marianna: Alexis dear, every time is an appropriate time for everything. Preferably as much of everything as possible. Any objections, Tom? Master Phuttaisong? What about you, Mr. Gillan?

[Smithson and Phuttaisong assented. Gillan, having just taken the last bite of his third sandwich, nodded and held up his right thumb.]

Quay: It looks like your way is clear, Master Dante.

Dante: Right. Hit it!

[Here Dante invoked a complex Effect showing Master-level skill in Forces, Mind, and Correspondence Spheres and (presumed) lesser skill in Prime and Life. Beginning display of fireworks from Saxum Oculorum above Table Cenacle. Streamers of light surrounded Council Chamber, swirled, oscillated, and produced orchestral rendition of chorus from an American popular song, nonsense title believed to be "Zip-a-dee Doo Dah."

[At end of chorus: Nine cartoon like duplicates manifested from Dante in a conventional Polyappearance Effect. All sang chorus of song in four-part harmony while dancing on table. At verse, "Mister Bluebird on my shoulder," duplicates shrank to six inches high and flew to perch on shoulders of Masters present, one duplicate each. Sang verse. Duplicate on Nile's shoulder kissed her ear.

[Orchestral music resumed. Each duplicate lifted one Council chair, with Master still in it, above table. Path of chairs interwove in complex dancelike pattern around central sphere, which periodically shot out translucent globes of colored light that each enveloped a single chair. First globe red, second globe orange, then yellow, and so on. After each chair had received a globe, colors of globes progressed through spectrum in synchrony, creating illusion of bands of color proceeding from one end of Table Cenacle to other.]

Dante: Everybody sing!

[Chorus repeated as Masters sang, with varying confidence, in ragged harmony. Much laughter as seats descended to their former places, lights and music faded, duplicates merged with Dante. Effect concluded with second display of fireworks. Analysis of Effect to follow in later dispatch.]

Quay: Wonderful!

Marsh: I had no idea —!

Smithson: Felt like a peyote vision.

Marianna: You thought so too? Dante, Dante. There's the fun-loving boy I used to know.

Hastings: [Laughter.] I've never been so embarrassed in my life!

Witz: Then you've lived a blessed life. You sang beautifully. Marvelous, Dante.

Phuttaisong: Yes. But what is this word "zipadeedoodah"?

[Laughter. Nile rose and hugged Dante.]

Quay: What did you think, Mr. Gillan? Mr.—? Where did he go?

[— ATTENTION: ENTER ACTION DESCRIPTOR —]

[— ATTENTION: DO YOU WISH A DESCRIPTOR? (Y/N) —]

[—ALERT: UNIDENTIFIED DISRUPTION AT OPERATIVE CONTROLS —]

[—INVESTIGATE IMMEDIATELY —]

[—ENCRYPTION ON —]

[— AUTOMATIC TRANSCRIPTION MODE ENGAGED 01/14/1996 17:07:02 —]

[—PRESUMED SPEAKER IDENTIFIED IN {brackets} —]

[UNIDENTIFIED SOUND. DISTANCE: 0.45 METERS.]

{Quay?}: What was that?

{Nile?}: I think it came from that ball up there!

{Dante?}: That was {our/hour} Mr. Gillan, if everything worked out.

{Hastings?}: If what worked out?

{Nile?}: {Woe/Whoa!} He's {here/hear} beside me!

{Gillan?}: Got him. He's out cold.

{Marianna?}: Who is that? He looks familiar.

{Dante?}: {No/Know} idea, but he's been spying on all of us, at least since Nile and I arrived.

{MULTIPLE VOICES: Nile? Quay? Smithson?}: What?

{Gillan?}: Had a whole listen-and-transcribe set-up in a space-pocket inside that sphere. Very sly. But the thing that lets me sleep easy at night is, no matter how many Spheres they've mastered, if they don't expect you and don't see you coming, a {conk?} on the {noggin?} still drops them. I guess Master Marsh could speak to that point better than I could.

{Marsh?}: Rather than bait me to {no/know} purpose, Mr. Gillan, why don't you explain who this is?

{Gillan?}: {Right/Rite}. Looks like a fellow name of Julianno Galbrese, a Hermetic in the Glass Eye cabal in Doissetep.

{Smithson?}: The same as that Thrun. {They're/There/Their} crawling out of the woodwork.

{Gillan?}: Those security people do {their/there/they're} own and everyone else's dirty work. Lots of dirty work to be done at Doissetep.

{Quay?}: But how did you know he was {here/hear}?

{Dante?}: I keep a sentry routine running that alerts me to eavesdroppers. It sets up a high-frequency microwave screen, then tracks resonances set up by invasive scans.

{Hastings?}: Oh, yes! I {read/red} your paper on telemetry techniques!

{Nile?}: Wait a minute, that machine has been bathing me with microwaves?

{Dante?}: Relax, {it's/its} very low amperage.

{Hastings?}: I must say, brilliant work, although I wonder whether a low-frequency etheric wave might do just as well —

{Marianna?}: If we can leave the technical details for later, would you please tell us —

{Dante?}: Right. So I noticed when I got here that the central globe was recording us.

{Quay?}: Of course. That's {no/know} secret. {It's/its} standard procedure for all conversations in this chamber.

{Dante?}: I'd {heard/herd} that. So I blocked it out. I never much cared for eavesdroppers, "standard procedure" or not. But then I noticed that my blocking was only taking out part of the resonance. I was picking up a second signal from the same sphere. It showed the wave signature of a surveillance scanner I recognized. Design circulated on the Web a few years back. Old now, but much newer than anything Horizon has.

{Gillan?}: So during his {dog-and-pony?} show just now, he had one of his little copies whisper in my brain about this. A word to the wise, and all that. I nipped up inside the globe and greeted our new friend with a belt on the back of the neck. And the rest is history.

{Marsh?}: Master Dante, you entrusted the capture of a Doissetep security agent to a Disciple, rather than {one/won} of us?

{Gillan?}: {Hey/Hay}, lady, I got the job done. Besides, I had to do my little show of competence for everyone too. This was it. One more box checked off.

{Dante?}: It's true. Actually, I {know/no} zip about his skill in Forces, but I'd call Mr. Gillan a pretty fair Adept in Correspondence. Not that I'm giving up my seat to you, understand.

{Gillan?}: Fine {where/wear} I am, thanks.

{Nile?}: Is that {right/write}, Dante? {You're/Your} sticking around?

{Dante?}: Well, I'm not much for groups. But seems to me the Traditions need all the help they can get.

NEW VOICE. TENTATIVE IDENTIFICATION:
Operative Galbrese?: Uhhh...

{Gillan?}: Watch him, mates, he's a killer.

{Phuttaisong?}: There is {no/know} worry. I make him calm. Ask him question, and he will speak truth.

{Quay?}: Master Galbrese, who sent you to spy on us?

{Operative Galbrese?}: I was sent by

(CAERON: I won't trouble you with the rest of this transcript, which makes dry and depressing reading. No doubt much of the deceitful pawn Galbrese's recitation is mere slander.

(I will add, to satisfy your curiosity, that Master Dante proved as Adept (!) as his Tradition's cognomen implies in retrieving the files of the duplicitous peon Galbrese, which had been encoded or erased by some means that proved transparently ineffective to our Master Dante. I believe with Dante's presence in Horizon, and that of these other far-sighted magi, that (after the trial and probable Branding of the Judas instrument Galbrese) we may hope for new and wondrous developments.

(And that is a happy destiny for all who wish to overcome our common enemies, don't you agree, Caeron?

(I look forward to discussing this with you at much greater length, at a time and place you shall discover later. — P.)

BLAKE
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Chapter Two: Horizon's History

Possunt quia posse videntur.
(They can because they think they can.)
— Vergil

Welcome to Horizon



Imagine a Realm that has honored its past without sacrificing its vision for the future. Imagine a Realm where you can sample everything the Traditions have to offer — the Ecstatic pleasure baths, the extensive Antiquarium Hermeticorum, the Verbenas' Gardens of Life, the exquisite Akashic Flame Temple and much more.

Imagine studying and living side by side with some of the Traditions' most renowned scholars, scientists, artists and Masters. Imagine a place renowned for its sense of unity and cooperation, where hospitality and fresh

ideas intermingle freely. Imagine a Realm that offers boundless opportunities for relaxation and study — the gravity bands of Mt. Apollo, mythic flora and fauna, the vast Horizon Archives Collections. Imagine such a place, and there you will find Horizon.

A Realm of History... and of the Future

Horizon Realm: cradle of the Traditions, the Council of Nine's historical capital and the template inspiring all future Horizon Realms. For the benefit of the visitor to

Horizon, renowned Archivist Nichodemus Mulhouse—in cooperation with Priabpan Punyabukkana of the Cult of Ecstasy—has assembled this fascinating outline of Horizon's history. Further information is available from Master Mulhouse at: ΥΩΣ, Archives Building, Horizon Chantry, Concordia, Horizon.

Fall *

Magnificent Autumn! He comes not like a pilgrim, clad in russet weeds. He comes not like a hermit, clad in grey. But he comes like a warrior, with the stain of blood upon his brazen mail. His crimson scarf is rent. His scarlet banner drips with gore. His step is like a flail upon the threshing-floor.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Prose Works

1330-1449 – Laying the Groundwork

- 1210: Destruction of Mistridge Covenant by Craftmasons.
- 1325: Convention of the White Tower.
- 1330-present: The Ascension War begins. The history of Horizon commences in the Fall, as the Primi (founders of the Council of Nine) construct Horizon prima-

rily as a desperate defensive measure against the nascent Order of Reason. (As Horizon circles around again to Spring, its purpose will have changed: It becomes a bastion of hope and unity, and begins thinking offensively.)

- 1420: Largely unsuccessful attempts to call a Tribunal of Magi, attributed to Seers of Chronos (now Cultists of Ecstasy) and Ahl-i-Batin.

• 1440: Mistridge Tribunal. Hermetic Master Baldric LaSalle begins quest to find great Magi. Meets with founding Masters Nightshade (Verbena) and Valoran (Celestial Chorus) in ruins of Mistridge. Companions include Ecstatic acolyte Kalas Jnana and four noble fae. Together, they decide to found a new “society,” which will become known as the Traditions. The fae disappear shortly thereafter, and Jnana departs to bring news to Sh’zar the Seer (later head of the Seers of Chronos).

- 1440-1449: The three original Primi set out on a quest to convince others to join them in forming a new magickal society. Others begin to assist them.

• 1447: Baldric appears at Doissetep, encouraging participation in planned Tribunal.

- 1448: The Order of Reason destroys Doissetep’s physical manifestation on Earth. Doissetep mages move the Chantry into the Shard Realm of Forces. The destruction of

1466: A Year of Documents

Certain documents have the power to shape history. Certainly no different, Horizon’s early documents have perhaps sculpted history more than those on Earth because of the way they have forged the Traditions that mold Reality there. The following constitute summaries of some of the most important historical documents in Horizon’s history:

- **The Resolutions:** Signed on the Summer Solstice, 1466, the *Resolutions* declared (among other things) the unity of the fledgling Traditions; the adoption of nine Spheres of magick and the Protocols; the quest for Ascension; and the ongoing meeting of the Council of Nine Mystic Traditions (known as the *Declaration of Council*).

• **The Protocols:** First signed in 1466, the *Protocols* set forth the Traditions’ basic rules of conduct with the intent of unification. Its basic affirmation is that “Horizon Magi” will work together for the common good and for mutual survival. Like the United States’ Constitution, it still undergoes changes and interpretations occasionally, all of which are recorded in supplements known as *The Amendments*. A few months after the *Protocols* were signed, the First Amendment was passed, stating that each Tradition has the right to choose a representative in the manner most fitting to its customs. Laws of jurisdiction, subrealm protocols, policing, survival and propagation, and civilized debate and dispute (including the current rules of certámen), are set forth in later amendments. The 10th Amendment is perhaps the most famous, as it calls for the formation of the First Cabal from among the finest mages in Horizon.

- **The Declaration of Council:** Signed in 1466, the *Declaration* rules that the Council of Nine will meet every nine years to set Horizon’s policy and review its course. Originally, strength of vote depended upon annual Quintessence donation: The more magickal power the Tradition funneled into Horizon, the more the Tradition’s vote counted at the Council Table. (Incidentally, this agreement may explain why the Sphere paradigm and other Hermetically oriented codifications dominated the *Protocols*, *Resolutions* and other early Horizon paradigms: The Order of Hermes is said to have inundated Horizon with Quintessence to gain a stronger vote.) In 1752, it was determined that each Council Member votes equally regardless of donation, and contributes as equally as possible to Horizon’s welfare.

• **The Compact of Callias:** A forerunner to the current Ambassador Program, the *Compact of Callias* mandated mixed-Tradition cabals as early as 1466. The First Cabal, noted for its mission, was also considered a daring mix of Traditions for its time. Many cabals from that period (and earlier) came from one or two allied groups—not from all nine. Many surviving mixed-Tradition cabals date from the formation of the March of the Nine. After the First Cabal’s failure, however, the *Compact* underwent a long, steady decline, and was finally officially abandoned in 1623, after the murder of three of Doissetep’s Drua’shi.



the largest Chantry on Earth signals the true onset of Fall for the paradigms of non-scientific mages.

- **1449:** Second Mistridge Tribunal. Many Magi have committed to Tribunal participation. Mages' resolve is strengthened after a second attack on Mistridge.

1450-1456 - The Creation of Horizon

- **1450:** After the Craftmasons' defeat, known as the Battle of Flames, the Primi decide to construct a Realm far from Earth in which to meet. The Primi are Baldric (Order of Hermes), Nightshade (Verbena), Valoran (Celestial Chorus), Star-of-Eagles (Dreamspeakers), Ali-beh-shaar (Ahl-i-Batin), Sh'zar the Seer (Seers of Chronos), Naioba and Star-of-Eagles (Dreamspeakers), Chalech (Euthanatos), Diplomate Luis (Alchemists) and Wu Jin (Akashic Brotherhood).

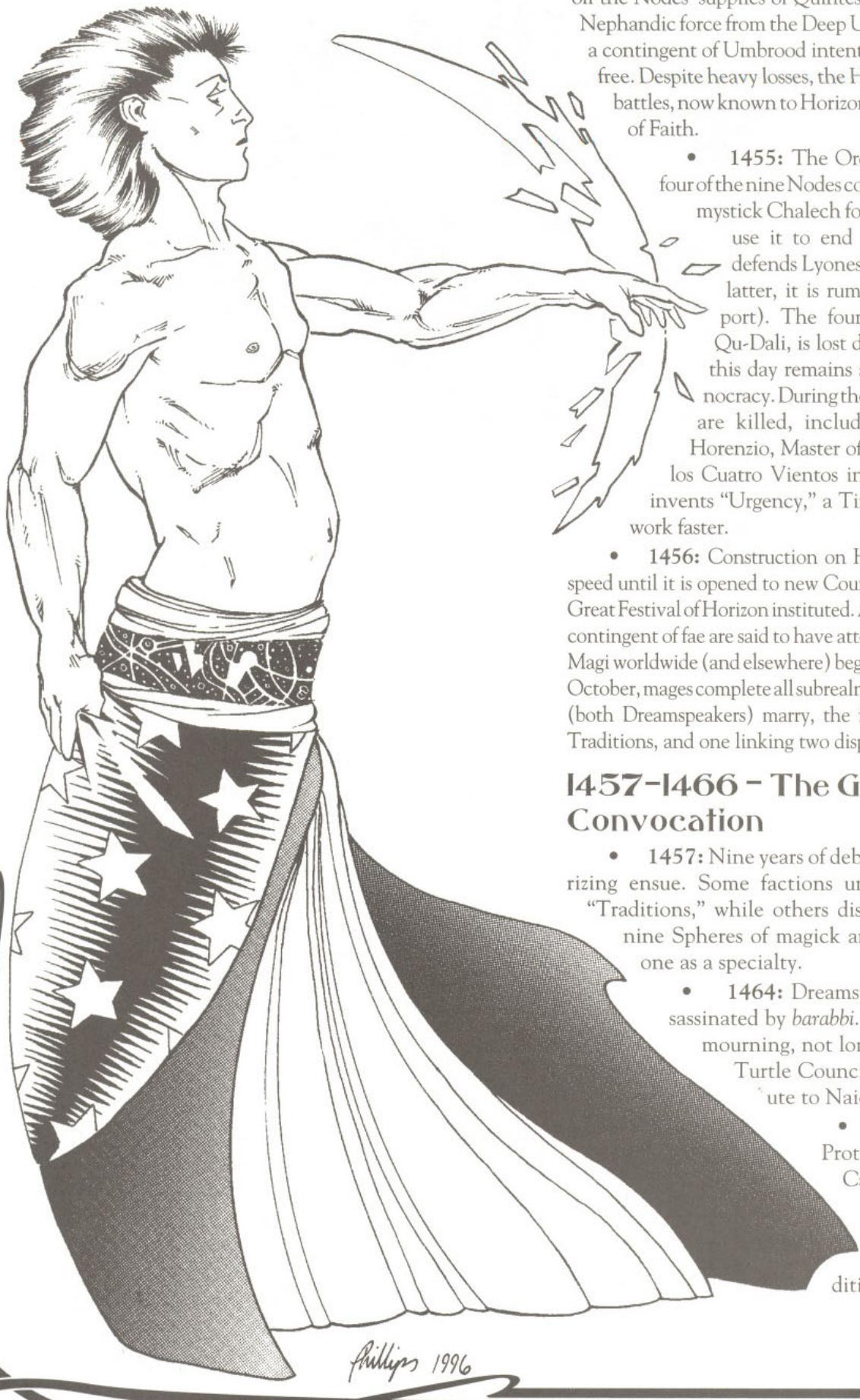
- **1451:** The Primi return to their native lands and convince their peoples to dedicate "Places of Power" (Nodes) with which to construct Horizon. First to contribute are Seers of Chronos, who offer the Gediz Caves. Their prompt action sets the standard for other groups.

- **1452:** Minor Tribunal, Gediz Caves. The Primi formally dedicate their Nodes (still known as the "Columns of Power" supporting Horizon). Primary Nodes include: in France — Floating tip of Lyonnnesse; in Britain — Stonehenge, Chalice Hill and Glastonbury Tor (where the Grail is supposedly hidden); in Ireland — Loch Neagh; in Italy — Nemi Lake, San Lorenzo in Lucina; in China — The Dragons of Guilin; in

North America — what was to become Arches National Park (Utah); in Turkey — Gediz Caves; in Persia — Artaxerxes' Court (Persepolis), Canyon of Qu'Dali; the Library of Alexandria. Later, various smaller Nodes dedicated to and withdrawn from Horizon include: the Northern Lights, Alaska; the legendary Fountain of Youth; Shadowmere Copse, Olympic National Forest, Washington; Mt. Napaliki, Kauai (where the Menehune, "little people," still live); Huayna Picchu, Peru ("Old Woman Mountain"); Great Salt Lake (later shrank as a result of battle between Order of Reason and Traditions, having been used as Tass); Machapuchare, Himalayas (Nepalese legend says that twin goddesses live atop this sacred peak); and Ayer's Rock (Uluru), central Australia.

- **1453:** Magi begin to tie Nodes into location, carving huge Realm from Reality. Urúshlakhg'run, a titanic Umbral Lord, contests the Primi's choice of locales and initiates Umbral battle. During battle, it gashes elemental earth on Horizon with claws, causing Sleeping Giant Inlets to appear. Master Nightshade's young apprentice Qi-Nagi (after whom the river is named) falls to Urúshlakhg'run at Keyhole Pass, but her sacrifice allows Magi to defeat and enchain Umbrood beneath Horizon Range. A period of mourning ensues.

- **1454:** Construction recommences in earnest. Primi argue over where to connect Nodes; finally decide to construct Crystal Bastions around City of Concordia which will funnel all Quintessence into Tribunal Chambers (the heart of Horizon) to be distributed equally from there. Primi realize that Quintes-



sence influx is attracting Umbrood and other, darker beings. Horizon Guards are established to protect boundaries, and are soon needed. Guards fight three major battles: the first against the Ch'ikch'h'ljkla, a legion of otherworldly parasites that feed off the Nodes' supplies of Quintessence; the second against a Nephantic force from the Deep Umbra; and the third against a contingent of Umbrood intent on setting Urúshlakhg'run free. Despite heavy losses, the Horizon Guards win all three battles, now known to Horizon scholars as the Three Tests of Faith.

- **1455:** The Order of Reason lays siege to four of the nine Nodes connected to Horizon. Deathmystick Chalech forced to withdraw Node and use it to end the siege; Horizon Guard defends Lyonesse and Stonehenge (for the latter, it is rumored they have faerie support). The fourth Node, the Canyon of Qu-Dali, is lost due to weak defense, and to this day remains a stronghold for the Technocracy. During these sieges, a number of mages are killed, including the invaluable Dom Horenzio, Master of Time, from the Cabala de los Cuatro Vientos in Spain, but not before he invents "Urgency," a Time spell which helps Magi work faster.

- **1456:** Construction on Horizon progresses at double speed until it is opened to new Council members on April 30th. Great Festival of Horizon instituted. Attracted by Beltaine, a small contingent of fae are said to have attended certain festivals, while Magi worldwide (and elsewhere) begin to trickle into Horizon. By October, mages complete all subrealms. Star-of-Eagles and Naioba (both Dreamspeakers) marry, the first such union among the Traditions, and one linking two disparate peoples.

1457-1466 - The Grand Convocation

- **1457:** Nine years of debate, positioning and theorizing ensue. Some factions unite under each of nine "Traditions," while others disperse. Council agrees on nine Spheres of magick and each Tradition adopts one as a specialty.

- **1464:** Dreamspeaker Master Naioba assassinated by *barabbi*. Dreamspeakers retreat in mourning, not long thereafter constructing Turtle Council House subrealm as tribute to Naioba.

- **1466:** Resolutions, Protocols and the Compact of Callias passed. By late autumn, Council appoints First Cabal from among finest mages in each Tradition.

Winter

A long, hard winter lived through from beginning to end without shirking is one of the most salutary experiences in the world. There is no nonsense about it; you could not indulge in vapors and the finer sentiments in the midst of its deadly earnest if you tried.

— Mary A. B. Arnim, *The Solitary Summer*

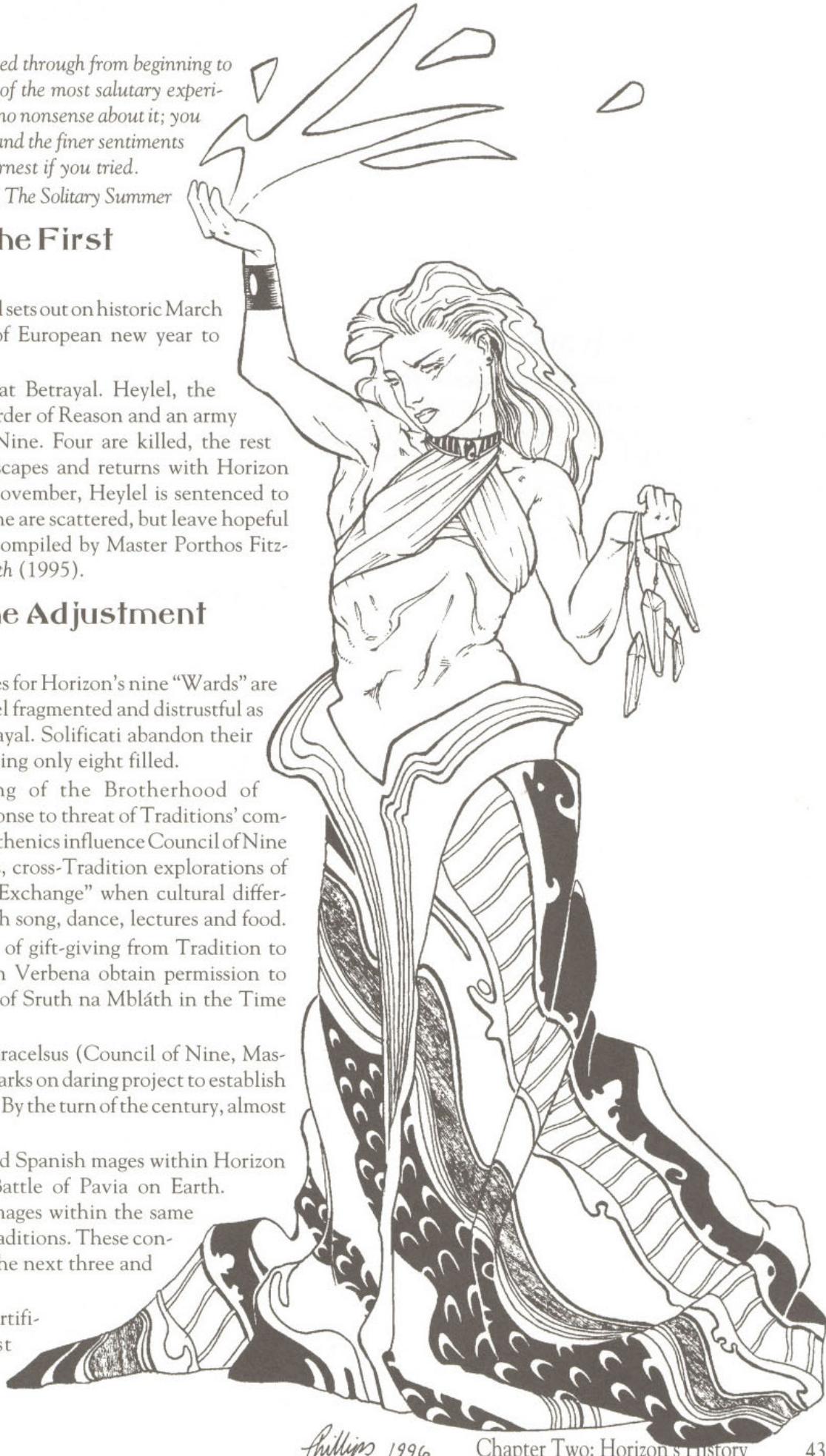
1467-1470 - The First Cabal

- 1467: First Cabal sets out on historic March of Nine in first month of European new year to spread mission of hope.
- 1470: The Great Betrayal. Heylel, the Cabal's leader, sets the Order of Reason and an army of Inquisitors upon the Nine. Four are killed, the rest imprisoned, while one escapes and returns with Horizon mages to free them. In November, Heylel is sentenced to Gilgul and death. The Nine are scattered, but leave hopeful legacies which are later compiled by Master Porthos Fitz-Empress in *The Fragile Path* (1995).

1471-1563 - The Adjustment Period

- 1471: Boundaries for Horizon's nine "Wards" are established. Traditions feel fragmented and distrustful as a result of the Great Betrayal. Solificati abandon their Seat on the Council, leaving only eight filled.
- 1475: Founding of the Brotherhood of Cleisthenics cabal in response to threat of Traditions' complete fragmentation. Cleisthenics influence Council of Nine to establish more festivals, cross-Tradition explorations of the Realm and "Days of Exchange" when cultural differences are explored through song, dance, lectures and food.
- 1478: Tradition of gift-giving from Tradition to Ward is established when Verbena obtain permission to grow the pleasure garden of Sruth na Mbláth in the Time Ward.
- 1482: Master Paracelsus (Council of Nine, Master, Order of Hermes) embarks on daring project to establish universities across Europe. By the turn of the century, almost 80 exist.
- 1525: French and Spanish mages within Horizon feud as a result of the Battle of Pavia on Earth. Rivalries erupt between mages within the same Tradition and between Traditions. These conflicts arise repeatedly for the next three and a half decades.

- 1535: Cabal of Artificers finds its way past Horizon's defenses undetected and begins



experimentation on Gaia's Vortex (elemental spring in Horizon's northern timber forests). Unknowingly pollute Earth's waters until the Medeans capture them. Artificers yield valuable information about Order of Reason and, after great controversy, are later apprenticed under Paracelsus in Order of Hermes. Artificers' capture lifts morale for a time.

- 1542: Spread of portable mechanical clocks helps Order of Reason solidify Reality paradigm for Time. Membership in Seers of Chronos declines.
- 1563 - present: Order of Reason (Technocracy) infiltrates European universities earlier established by Horizon with help of Order of Hermes. Artificers are suspected.

1564-1655 - Rivalries

- 1564-1570: Refugees from European witch-hunts pour into Horizon; arrangements are made to increase housing. Doissetep Chantry, oft-acclaimed as Horizon's "sister Chantry," publicly blames Horizon for the inefficacy of the university plan. Many Horizon mages affiliated with Doissetep are shunned and eventually leave. Smaller projects initiated with Doissetep are terminated. Doissetep withdraws its support of Horizon, and Master Paracelsus returns to the Shard Realm of Forces. Master Porthos begins to visit Horizon more frequently.
- 1610: Council of Nine redesigns Council Chambers, adding Halls leading to subrealms and incorporating elements of more non-European cultures in its decor. Some mages speculate that Horizon is trying to outdo Doissetep's impressive architecture.

• 1612: Horizon mages catch Doissetep Adepts spying on private Tradition meetings. Doissetep claims Horizon is holding its Adepts hostage. Council of Nine convenes to deal with the matter, ultimately deciding to drop charges if Doissetep publicly supports Horizon. Doissetep agrees. Shortly thereafter, the Council of Nine institutes policy regarding spies: Avatar branding and 20 years forced labor.

• 1623: Meeting between Doissetep's Drua'shi cabal and the Council of Nine. Proceedings are secret. Two months later, three Drua'shi Masters are assassinated. Everyone suspects Doissetep's other cabals, although the crime is never solved. Hermetics, Euthanatos and Akashics (whose Drua'shi colleagues were murdered) officially abandon Seats on Council of Nine. Compact of Callias, long declining in practice, abandoned officially.

• 1624: Remaining Council declares a Peace Tribunal, urging all Tradition Masters to attend.

• 1625-1654: Hundreds of mages convene on Idrinios Tor (see map) for the Peace Tribunal. Council of Nine seeks to reestablish mutual peace and support among the Traditions. Abandoned Seats are refilled with former representatives. The Peace Tribunal ushers in almost three decades of self-assessment and spiritual healing among the Traditions and is widely acclaimed as a "Winter thaw," although Doissetep's mages are conspicuously absent.

1655-1735 - A Remodeling

- 1655: Doissetep scores a major victory over the Technocracy, capturing the entire Dome of the Golden Eye Construct. Shortly thereafter, Doissetep becomes a fashionable place for Horizon mages to visit.
- 1657: Five of Doissetep's mages visit Horizon under the rubric of sharing information learned from its Technocratic captives. A long period of politicking begins.
- 1672: Doissetep leaks information about Technocratic and Nephantic spies infiltrating Horizon. Citing recent experience dealing with such threats, it succeeds in replacing Horizon's Ward Masters with members of the Janissaries cabal from Doissetep.
- 1712: Janissaries succeed in routing out three Nephandi and a Technocratic spy. Some mages suspect a setup. Politicking continues, as Horizon grows gradually weary of Doissetep's influence.
- 1735: Archmages within Janissaries vie for more representation on the Council, seeking to unseat certain Traditions. This move fuels resentment felt amongst most Traditions toward Doissetep's meddling in Horizon's affairs.

Spring

Rеволюции не делаются: они приходят. Революция — это естественный рост, как у дуба. Она приходит из прошлого. Ее основы заложены давно.

— Wendell Phillips, *Orations*

1736-1945 - The Sublime

• 1736: Council of Nine ousts Janissaries, returning the Medeans cabal to its former status as guardians of Horizon. Before Doissetep can blackmail them, several Adepts and Masters within various Horizon cabals come forward to announce their complicity in illicit Doissetep-bred schemes. Council of Nine pardons them, but secretly assigns Medeans to oversee their activities.

• 1750: Council of Nine holds Tribunal of Recruitment, urging Traditions to bring additional trustworthy mages into the fold. After the Doissetep fiasco, the Traditions are skeptical, but comply.

• 1756: Over 100 Native American Dreamspeakers withdraw from Horizon. Citing prejudice, they take their families back to Earth or to a Realm of their own.

• 1825: Membership in Traditions increases, particularly among the flagging Seers of Chronos (now known as the Sahajiya, but soon renamed the Cultists of Bacchus, and finally the Cultists of Ecstasy). Morale among the Traditions increases steadily.

• 1872: Order of Hermes begins to investigate a weak link in the Technocracy's chain, the Electrodyne Engineers, for possible recruitment. With interest in the occult, Eastern philosophy and spiritualism surging, the European paradigm wobbles from its firm Technocratic

base. Sleeper curiosity works in the Traditions' favor; Awakenings increase during the later 19th century, as dissatisfaction with industrialism grows.

- 1904: Technocracy moves to take over Quintessence reserves in the Middle East. Ahl-i-Batin suffer tremendous losses and begin to decline.

- 1905: Sons of Ether defect from the Technocracy to join the Traditions.

- 1906: Sons of Ether are given a permanent Seat on the Council, finally filling the spot vacated by the Solificati after Heylel's Betrayal.

- 1932: After extended dispute with European-based Traditions over exploitation of Middle-Eastern resources, Ahl-i-Batin abandon Seat on Council. Council of Nine is now eight again.

- 1939-45: WWII erupts, causing great division within Horizon's ranks, particularly during Council Meeting in 1943. Brief alliance with Technocracy eliminates growing Nephantic threat; alliance dissolved and disavowed in 1946. After the war, Horizon's new blood, the Sons of Ether, prove a unifying force by urging the Traditions to set aside differences.

Summer

Success is sweet: the sweeter if long delayed and attained through manifold struggles and defeats.

— A. Bronson Alcott, *Table Talk*

1946-present - A Stronghold of Hope

- 1946: A spirit of rebirth pervades the Council after years of war. Reconciliation Day instituted.

- 1952: 54th Council held. Most Council Members attend, but tension is high and morale seems low.

- 1961: After 55th Council, the Virtual Adepts join the Traditions, filling the ninth Council Seat and contributing valuable information about the Technocracy shortly thereafter.

- 1963-1993: Dedication wanders. International trade, technology surge and cultural strife diverts Council unity. Many modern mages seem preoccupied with mortal affairs and personal power. Horizon regarded as archaic holdover, and often ignored. Realm itself prospers in spite of inattention, however, and seems to thrive on its own.

- 1970: Hollow Ones petition Horizon for membership in Traditions, but are rejected. Rumors of imminent attack on Horizon begin filling Council Chambers.

- 1988: 58th Council held; only three Tradition representatives attend.

- 1993: Mysterious symbol appears on 10th Seat of Council, on traditional date of the Great Horizon Festival. Idea of "ambassador program" first raised.

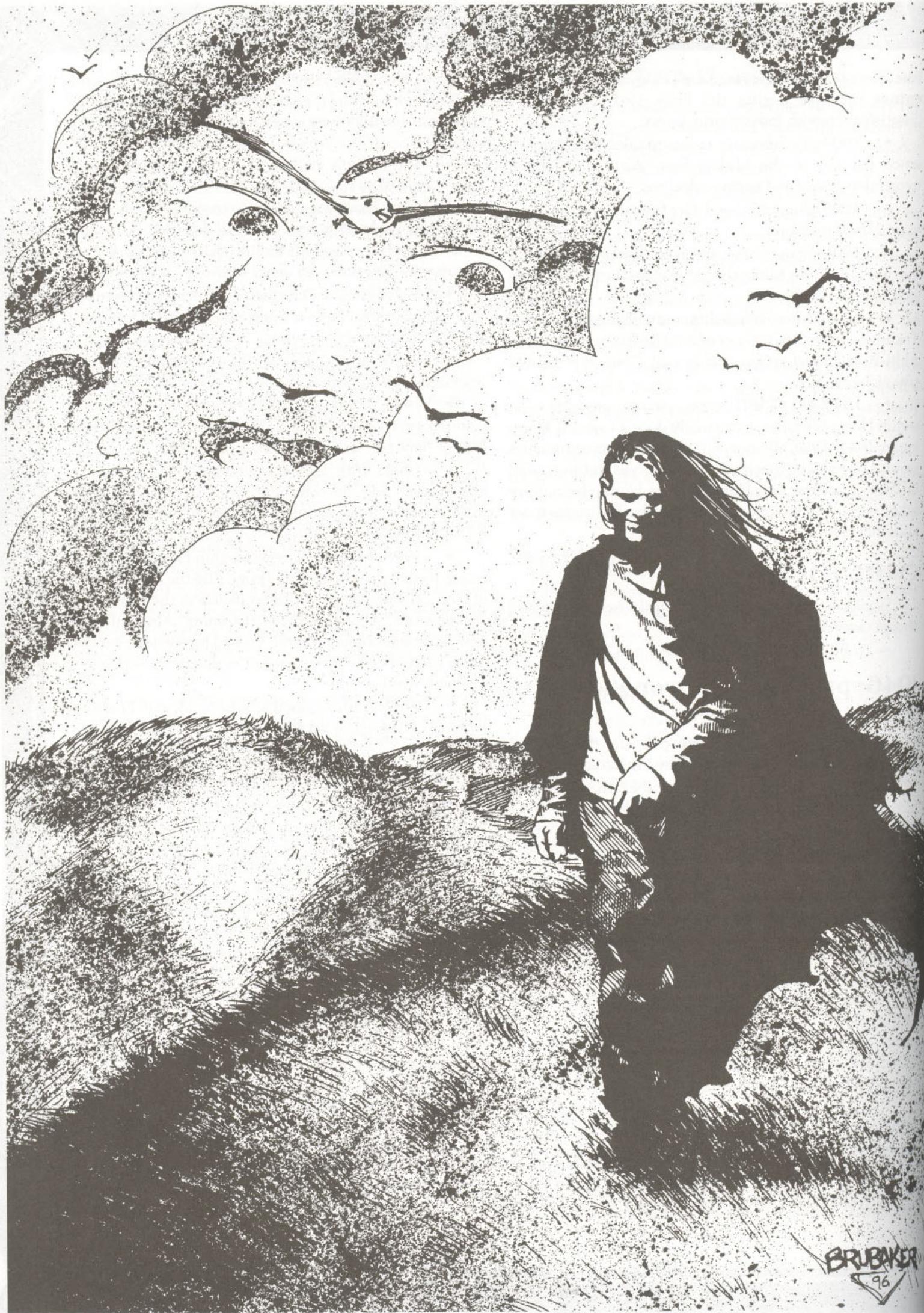
- 1995: 10th region is formed when Great Rift opens up on Posht, the continent opposite Horizon Chantry in Horizon Realm, between the territories of the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts.

- 1996: Movement begins within Fresh Wind Covenant to abolish Wards, which symbolize the divisive spirit of Horizon's Winter politics after its loss of the First Cabal and its faith. Support seems forthcoming. Also, influx of new archmages rumored to be invited by outside element. Some mages believe they come as replacements for absent Council Members.

- 1997: 59th Council is scheduled. All Tradition representatives are urged to attend.

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* The following subdivisions are made at Master Mulhouse's insistence. Any questions or comments should be forwarded to him at the Archives Building. For further information, see *The Fragile Path: Testaments of the First Cabal* compiled by Master Porthos Fitz-Empress (White Wolf, 1995).



Chapter Three: The Realm

*Future ages will wonder at us, as the
present age wonders at us now.*

— Pericles

Horizon. *The Traditions'* Chantry. A mystickal United Nations. Doissetep's Gemini, her enlightened twin sister. Like a seed in the gardener's glove, Horizon has the potential to be all things. In the Realm's rising Summer, it may achieve that goal.

Perhaps to gather impetus, such a Summer required the long Winter years. Now, as it enters Summer after an extended Spring, the Realm radiates a sense of wonder, history and immense magickal power. Horizon is a world in motion, perpetually changing; even the Realm's geography continues to shift unpredictably. Although created from human will and purpose, the place has attained a life of its own. Even lifetime residents are constantly amazed by the surprises the Realm has to offer.

On the Outside



Our Lord... Allah... the Goddess... even the Sky-father — all gods are masks of the One Divinity, because That face is too blinding to look upon directly.

—Primus Valoran to the Grand Convocation, Summer Equinox 1466.

So how does one get to Horizon? It's not easy. While the existence of the Realm may be fairly common knowledge among mysticks, finding the keys to the castle is difficult indeed. A chronicle involving Horizon often starts on Earth. From there, wonders begin.

Most visits commence with an invitation or a summons. All Tradition Masters in good standing with the Council have their names on file in the Archives. With a little bit of work (and possibly politicking), a noted Master can wrangle the current password and protocols for a visit. Lesser mages may be brought along by a more prestigious patron, especially if they've somehow proved themselves worthy.

A summons may be issued through some powerful third party if the player cabal has performed a service — or has committed a crime — that the “movers and shakers” would notice. Most summoned visitors are brought to a portal and guided through, and then taken to an audience with the party who “requested” their presence. Depending on the summons and service, this could be public or highly covert.

While it helps to have an invitation, gatecrashers do manage to find their way into the Council’s domain. No full-scale invasion, however, has succeeded since the Realm’s inception, and infiltrations have become more difficult in recent years. Most intruders target the Earthside Nodes which supply the Realm’s Quintessence, either for robbery or for assault. Naturally, the portals and Nodes have been hidden or disguised, and are heavily defended. New ley lines and Nodes are in demand; no one knows when some powerful Qui La Machinæ — or act of mortal politics — might hover in and take some necessary support away from the Realm....

Horizon’s Nodes

Nine star-shaped bastions project from the Diamond Wall of Concordia, which encircles Horizon Chantry. Between each of these bastions is a gate named after one of the Spheres of magick (e.g., the Gate of Forces) and controlled by the appropriate Tradition. Linked to nine major Nodes on Earth — as well as to a host of smaller ones — each bastion funnels Quintessence through the so-called Fenestrae, or windows, designed into the Chantry’s central complex. In a spirit of cooperation 500 years ago, each Tradition donated a major Node to support Horizon’s Quintessence needs. Over the last five centuries, many of these Nodes have come under attack, resulting in momentous Umbral battles during which smaller Nodes have been lost. Thankfully, Horizon has also gained many places of power throughout the last few centuries.

Each of the Nodes described can be considered an endless source of Quintessence; each radiates an aura of sacred power that even Sleepers can feel, and it cannot be drained by anything less than a full Technocratic assault. In the Penumbra, these places seem vivid even by the spirit world’s standards. Though their glows have been damped and their “supply lines” have been cloaked, any visitor with Awareness, Intuition or Prime magick can sense the unusual nature of these locations. All Prime magick difficulties are

at -3 difficulty within a half-mile of each Node; even Sleepers feel more alive and energized if they visit these places.

The Dragons of Guilin

A mountain range considered to be the embodiment of the power of nature, the Dragons of Guilin, located near Nanjing in western China, is also one of China’s most beautiful sacred landscapes. Dedicated to Horizon in 1468, this Node provides “flavored” Quintessence that allows the mage to attune herself to nature and elemental magicks.

Arches National Park

Located in Moab, Utah, this park has long been a sacred place for Native American shamans, from pre-Columbian nomads to the later Cheyenne and Lakota. Natural stone arches, red-rock canyons, spires, fins and balancing rocks catch the sun’s glow at dawn and sunset, setting the landscape afire with a surreal array of wind-worn geometric shapes. Landscape Arch, one of the largest natural arches in the world, focuses the Quintessence generated by the wonder and sense of the sacred that visitors feel when viewing the park’s arches and then feeds it to Horizon.

Powerful elemental spirits guard this Node; they’re somewhat hostile toward white visitors who get too close. Many tourists (and would-be Quintessence thieves) disappear around the arches if they linger after dark....

San Lorenzo in Lucina

One of Rome’s oldest Christian places of worship, this church was built on a sacred well of Juno, protector of women. The Quintessence derived from this Node feels aged, the result of both modern visitors’ profound sense of its historicity and the lingering wonder and hope of Juno’s long-dead worshippers.

San Lorenzo is a public place, defended by a small army of dedicated Christian priests and church guards. The local politicians and commoners take a very dim view of anyone who appears to be disrespectful of the church’s holiness.

Gediz Caves, Turkey

Located near Izmir, Turkey, these caves were once the site of the Vedrizi tribes’ initiatory rites, which involved sexual rites and the smoking of the sacred *basehir*. The caves, still undiscovered by modern Sleepers, are scattered throughout the Boz Dağları (“Gray Mountains”) and descend below sea level in places. Natural air shafts extending hundreds of meters up through fissures in the rock once offered adequate ventilation for tribal rites, while seawater inlets thousands of meters below the cave entrances provided occupants with an abundance of food.

After contacting Horizon for permission, some mages visit this site in preparation for Seekings or for trips to Horizon; one of the Realm’s great portals is located in a remote cavern within



this very cave system. Some Vedrizi still live within the caverns — blind but hypersensitive — and guard the Node. Their silence and savagery is nearly inhuman, and the designs they paint upon the walls are even more remarkable considering the artists' lack of sight. Ecstatics within Horizon inform the Vedrizi if they expect guests, and ask the guardians to guide the pilgrims to the appropriate caves, where *basehir* ashes, untouched for thousands of years, can still be found. Time passes at odd intervals here, which shouldn't be surprising considering that it was the Seers of Chronos who dedicated this Node to Horizon upon its founding.

Artaxerxes' Court, Persepolis (Iran)

Dedicated by the Euthanatos in the 1450s, this Node is the site of Persian King Artaxerxes III's assassination by imperial court Eunuch Bagoas in 338 BCE. To the Euthanatos, it represents both the death of the Persian king and the collapse of his empire, which fell shortly thereafter to Alexander. The bitter emotions of the ancient Persians and the symbolism of the fall of an empire power this Node.

Those who attempt to defile this Node die of a horrible wasting disease, or fall victim to strange "accidents" within several hours of their departure.

The Library of Alexandria, Carthage

A gift unwillingly given to Horizon, the site of the former Alexandrian library represents a powerful Node to the Order of Hermes. Burnt down by a group of invading Muslims in 697, the library contained a wealth of writings from classical antiquity to the (then) modern age, numbering almost a half-million papyrus scrolls during the Roman era. During the last hours of the fire, four courageous Hermetics braved the blaze and the battle to save a few thousand scrolls from the charring library. These they moved to a monastery for safekeeping until, in 707, they finished construction on a secret set of catacombs under a decrepit mosque by the harbor. They moved the scrolls there, to their final housing, in 708.

Before the Hermetics conferred the still-active Node upon Horizon Realm, they debated for years before finally deciding that the Council's mission was more important than the Order's need for another Node. Today, the power remains (guarded by potent Force wards), but the scrolls have been moved deep beneath the Alexandrian park, Midan saad Zaghloul. The area, known as the Ramla, has become a shopping district; a perfect locale for the West Delta Transport Company, a Hermetic-run front that ferries authorized visitors back and forth to the Node and its catacombs.

Loch Neagh, Ireland

Here, according to Celtic myth, Liban, the sole survivor of her family, was trapped in a magickal underground

well with her dog for a year until she willed herself into the shape of a salmon. Later she transformed into a mermaid, turned her dog into an otter and lived 300 years as such until someone heard her singing and rescued her. Baptized as Muirghen ("Sea-Born"), she was supposedly conveyed to Heaven by horned deer. The Celts hold this story close to their hearts, providing the Node Loch Neagh (where the events took place) with an abundance of Quintessence.

A coven of six Verbena and seven consors live nearby, guarding the Node with their lives. A pack of huge black dogs, highly resistant to magick, are said to prowl nearby at all hours of the day or night.

Thomas Edison's Lab, New Jersey

The Sons of Ether practically worship this Node, where the famous inventor perfected the incandescent light bulb, improved the slow stock ticker and invented the phonograph. Here, Edison also recorded "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on November 20, 1877, on a tinfoil cylinder; any Etherite worth his salt owns one of the several hundred tinfoil phonographs that were sold as novelty items over the following two years. The laboratory itself is quite public, and the police chief has been well paid to keep an eye on it.

Digital Web

The Virtual Adepts funnel Quintessence from numerous sites on the Digital Web into Horizon. The Batini Node Mt. Pamukkale (Turkey) once provided similar amounts of Quintessence, until the Ahl-i-Batin left the Traditions and took the Node with them. Consequently, the continent of Posht shrunk in size, coinciding with the appearance of Mt. Apollo's gravity bands. When the Virtual Adepts first linked the Digital Web's Quintessence output to Horizon, the volcanoes at Posht's center harmlessly enlarged the continent to the size it once had been.

Access: The Ways

Officially, only three portals, called the Ways, open into Horizon, although a number of illegal "backdoors" also lead there from locations in the Digital Web and the Crystal Palace. Secret places on Earth with thin Gauntlets, the Ways lead along twisted, shifting paths in the Umbra to guarded portals on Horizon.

Typically, Masters arrange to visit Horizon by sending word to one of their Tradition's ancestral Chantries. Each of these Chantries has a representative who sends visitation requests to Horizon via trans-Umbral communication. Horizon's mages reveal the rendezvous locations, multiple passwords and Umbral maps only to those Masters whom they know and trust. The mage-protectors of the Ways, known as the Servitors Principle, change these passwords,

paths and locations daily, and keep a list of the Masters who have been informed of these changes. Visitors obtain pass-cards to Concordia's gates (failure to use these when at the gates alerts the guardians) and glean other necessary information from their Tradition representatives.

Named after the Greek Fates Atropos, Clotho and Lachesis, these portals — which themselves pose immense danger to the uninvited — are assigned powerful guardians on both sides (see Chapter Five). The first set of guardians, a mysterious pair of characters, determines visitors' intentions by requesting the multiple passwords, which may constitute spoken words, sigils traced in the air, sounds or even a series of numbers and formulae. Characters must announce these passwords individually, for only one person is allowed to enter at a time. Tricks constitute grounds for ejection or attack. Once inside the passage, the visitors may regroup to follow the puzzling paths that lead through the Umbrae and into the Realm itself. Travelers who go around the first set of guardians must deal with another set at their destination....

Even with the passwords and maps, the trip to Horizon is never a simple one. Imagine a journey through a maze of shadows. Multicolored lights wash across a shifting pattern of impossible angles, curves and blind alleys. The normal laws of physics spiral off into demented tangents as all of your senses — even touch — rebel. Sensations without origin tickle you along the way, while more comforting sensations — a companion's voice, a friendly hand — fade in and out of your perceptions. Occasionally, odd tests or puzzles greet you along the way; unless you can solve them, you're trapped in unreal limbo. Such is passage through the Ways: disconnected, surreal and unnerving. Traveling through the Ways is *supposed* to be disconcerting; those who may be unworthy of the trip drop out before they arrive.

The Portals

The Atropos Portal is located in a remote cavern within the Gediz Caves (one of Horizon's Nodes) in Turkey. It is said that Atropos derives its power from its association with Shahazir, the great Sea-Wurm of the early Mythic Ages, who was birthed in the mystickal Cavern of Atropos and slid out into the Aegean's salty waters through one of Gediz's secret inlets. The warm, womblike portal is pitch-black and moist, and flows with intense, palpable Time, Prime and Spirit magicks. Two Turkish "children" serve as the first guardians; dressed in peasant clothing, these ancients speak all human languages. Walking through the passage is like wading through a thick wall of honey — sweet, slow and suffocating. On the other side, the guardian Desidious Mevara awaits. Around him, the skeletons of the uninvited lie encased in amber.

Crossing into Horizon

The Clotho Portal is located amidst the tangled growth of the Wahat al Farakhilah, the Oasis of Farakla, in a remote corner of the Libyan Desert. Guarded by two young Persian warriors (one male, one female in man's clothing) and the Izzyii, Clotho radiates strong Life, Forces, Mind and Matter magick. Entering the portal — a pair of twisted palms opening into a heavily shaded jungle of trees and undergrowth — visitors feel as if they're entering a greenhouse filled with incrementally more alien plants. The air is hot, humid, completely still and smells of rotting vegetation. Shriek screeches and low hissing sounds come from the canopy and the undergrowth.

Lachesis Portal (located in Moose Jaw Cemetery, near Ulysses, Kansas) attracts mages only. A mere 50 plots mark the cemetery, which sits in a hollow 75 yards from a backwater road in rural Kansas. At the center of this hollow lies a tumulus marked by a circle of mysterious stone monoliths. Only one guardian, Kakraw, haunts the cemetery and the tumulus. This entity appears alternately as a giant shadowy raven or a vulture. Lachesis Portal (with strong Entropy, Mind, Time and Correspondence magicks) lies at the center of the tumulus, an open grave with rough-hewn stone steps descending into total darkness. Even magick is useless against this mystick gloom. Only the dank odor of fungus and a persistent tapping sound accompany visitors through the portal into the shadowy Ways beyond.

None of the Ways enters Horizon in the same place twice. While visitors often enter the Realm within a mile of Concordia, some have been stranded as far away as Posht.

The Backdoors

The majority of Horizon's mages abide by most of the laws of the Realm most of the time. Those who don't — among them certain Virtual Adepts — live to subvert these laws. Horizon's backdoors are living proof of this axiom: Crashspace, the Virtual Adept subrealm, contains two backdoors leading to the Spy's Demise and the Crystal Palace. Shivakti, Horizon's Ecstatic subrealm, contains a backdoor to Balador; Enochia bá Pymandre, the Hermetic subrealm, has a top-secret backdoor to Doissetep via the Mausoleum of LaSalle. All of these portals, which represent a perilous security breach for Horizon (and the places to which they are connected), have ridiculously dangerous security wards or guardians — often more dangerous than Horizon's official portals — and are the great secrets of their creators. Storytellers should keep this in mind if players try to breach any of these backdoors.

Storytellers should have a field day with players traveling to Horizon, especially on their first trip. The dizzying sense of dislocation is one of the Realm's most subtle yet effective defenses. The passage is never the same trip twice. Even archmages find the journey to and from Horizon to be unpredictable.

Clever magick is required of those who would sidestep the portals' guardians; it's difficult to either fool or fight them. Bluffing past them is difficult, but possible; this might involve either Manipulation or Charisma, although Appearance might work if the player is lucky. Depending on the visitor's approach, useful Abilities might include Expression, Intimidation, Seduction, Subterfuge, Leadership or Enigmas. These guardians are not impressed easily; a roll to do so would demand at least three successes against difficulty 9, and should be roleplayed out.

If visitors' intentions seem questionable, the guardians activate the Ways' defenses and then attack. If the guardians are unsuccessful, each passage takes over and deals with its invaders differently: Atropos unspins the invader's life patterns, Clotho weaves the invader's patterns too tightly, and Lachesis accelerates the invader's natural disintegration process. Storytellers should assume that each portal has five dots in its Spheres (listed below), Arete 7, Quintessence 50, and can bring any Effect within its Spheres to bear on invaders. These numbers must be high to repel invaders if the Ways' guardians are killed.

Once permitted through the portal, characters may follow the disconcerting passage by making an extended Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty 6, 10 successes minimum), as they attempt to understand the path and untangle the puzzles and dangers within (we suggest that Storytellers roleplay this journey). Characters who botch lose their way and must retrace their steps to the path before continuing on to Horizon.

If you, the Storyteller, want to test the effects the passage has on the travelers, you might have them make a Willpower roll or two (difficulty 7) to continue onward. Those who lose falter, and may they try to return to more familiar territory.

Simply "gating" in or out of Horizon with Correspondence or Spirit magick is foolhardy. 500 years of wards, barriers and countermagicks protect the Realm. This is isn't to say the task is impossible; doing so, however, would require a minimum of 15 successes at difficulty 10, with a the roll being considered "vulgar with witnesses." The consequences for botching during this attempt should be as horrific as you see fit to make them....

First Impressions



You do not summon spirits, bind them or banish them at your whim. Spirits are the guides and guardians of those with respect. It seems best to me that I claim this Spirit Seat before you disturb Grandmother's Dreams in your ignorance.

—Star-of-Eagles to the Grand Convocation, Summer Solstice 1466 (translated from the Mohawk by Nichodemus Mulhouse)

Plutarch, speaking of the buildings of the Acropolis when they were only 500 years old, claimed that they must have been "venerable as soon as they were built." Concordia, Horizon's sprawling compound, consists of hundreds of buildings surrounding the central historic Council Chamber, as well as the bustling villages neighboring it, must strike the first-time visitor in much the same way. Unlike the Acropolis, however, these are no mere mute ruins — these structures of Horizon testify to the living courage and hope of the mages who constructed the Realm through the sheer force of their own wills. The Council of Nine's ancestral seat of power, Horizon's long-awaited Spring has finally come and her Summer is just around the bend.

Horizon's size and sense of power should not be surprising, given the Realm's importance in the history of the Traditions. From Concordia — which lies at the center of the Realm — a gentle landscape of rolling hills, pristine lakes, villages and groves filled with mythical beasts ambles across a verdant valley and into the foothills of the majestic Horizon Range. Rising some 10,589 feet above the valley floor, Mt. Cyrillon is the greatest peak in this range, taller than Mt. Everest on Earth.

The Horizon Range completely encircles the Chantry's valley, its magickal properties and fierce inhabitants providing the valley's occupants with excellent protection from both Earthly and Umbral invaders. At night, its peaks crackle with an ethereal energy, casting a weird purple light onto the distant silhouettes of nocturnal dragons, ogres and other beasts living in its ravines and caves.

Though immense, the mountains only cast their gargantuan shadows across the vale at dusk, just before the first harvest moon rises to bathe the valley in its quiet, magickal glow. At sunset on the first day of winter each year — the day the First Cabal of the March of the Nine set out — the last ray of sunlight beams directly through Hope Niche in Keyhole Pass and into the Council Chambers at Horizon Chantry, illuminating Saxum Oculorum, the crystal sphere (or "Rock of Eyes") that records all that is said there. When Saxum Oculorum catches the sun's rays on this special day, it fills the entire Council Chamber with a breathtakingly beautiful, dancing, prismatic light. If you look hard enough at that hour, you can also see tiny faerie-like beings of light flitting through the Chambers and occasionally disappearing back into the sphere.

Certain mages claim that the rich warmth emitted from Horizon's magickal sunlight empowers one's Avatar and causes the souls of the Realm's inhabitants to shine with love. Others claim that the eldritch glow of Horizon's stars and moons (three yellow moons hang low and full in the night sky) creates mythical beings and mystically transforms the landscape so that accustomed paths and trails disappear at random. Indeed, Horizon's sunlight confers many more life-giving benefits than does the cold sun on Earth. Many Choristers and Verbena claim that Horizon's magickal sun is solely responsible for the

The Boundaries of Coincidental Magick

When the Realm was created, the mysticks worked its paradigm around their Traditional Arts. Technomagick was excluded, and with the exception of certain areas within Concordia and the Wards, remains so to this day. This "Paradox threshold" has foiled every Technocratic attempt to invade to date; their machines, procedures and other technomagickal toys inevitably bring down backlashes that demolish them in minutes. Only the wild Etherite devices and hacker Arts of the Adepts can withstand the Realm's reality boundaries for long.

Within Horizon, consider all mystical styles of magick — martial arts, alchemy, Hermetic secret codes, pagan nature magicks, etc. — to be coincidental. Summoning Effects from nowhere (i.e., without foci or rituals) is often coincidental, too, although foci bonuses still reduce difficulties. All technomagicks except for weird science and reality-hacking are vulgar everywhere except in the Council chambers and in the Technomancers' specific Wards and subrealms (where they're the norm and everything else is vulgar!).

Magick Arete rolls are as follows:

Coincidental: Highest Sphere +2

Vulgar without witnesses: Highest Sphere +3

Vulgar with witnesses: Highest Sphere +4

Really outrageous acts — levitating castles and such — may still have difficulties above and beyond the usual.

Note that "witnesses" includes anyone but yourself and your most intimate companions; there are not, for practical purposes, any Sleepers in Horizon. Although the majority of the folks here remain un-Awakened, everyone is aware of the reality of magick; they *have* to be.

Horizon does not add to anyone's Sphere ratings or Arete, nor can the Realm grant magickal powers to those who wouldn't normally possess them. Magick is still a higher state of being, and it still requires skill and dedication to master.

richness and warmth of this Tradition's Eden. The stars and moons have also been known to yield accurate prophecy to those mages who practice such arts.

Atmosphere

Characters listening to any of Horizon's Council mages will notice their tension, as if political events are now coming to a head. The Hermetic mage Porthos and the Verbena Charlotte Quay seem to be the topic of every conversation, accompanied by a smile or a sardonic sneer, depending on loyalties. Rumors of impending attack, although always common, spread with more conviction. Talk of Council replacements echoes through the Chambers. And the Syndicate's recent stranglehold on the United States' National Park system, which provides a large portion of Horizon's Quintessence, throws a cloud of worry over every face here.

On the other hand, an electric climate of hope, something almost unknown since the March of the Nine, pervades the spirits of many Horizon mages. A sense that momentous change is imminent prevails.

Population

For all its grandeur, Horizon is a wilderness. Even 500 years worth of habitation has not filled the countryside. The few towns are spacious and often secluded. Magick makes travel easy for most of the Realm's residents, and its resources give forth a seemingly endless bounty for the handfuls of humans who live here.

Horizon's mages have learned their lessons well on Earth; anything taken from nature is replenished immediately. A strict development code keeps harvesting within manageable levels, while magickal birth control measures and medicines keep the human population healthy but steady. During its foundation, Horizon played host to less than 2000 people; their ranks swelled during the Inquisition, but never got out of control. Although it's possible to prolong your life with magick, most residents — even Awakened ones — let their lives end when they may, naturally.

The Realm is not without its own means of population control. Severe storms sweep across the continent, especially during the rainy Spring season and deep Winter months (seasons here roughly match those of Earth for a number of reasons: mystick significance, familiarity, the ebb and flow of earth's own energies, etc.). The ecosystem includes Bygones — like dragons, manticores, kraken and even a scattering of dinosaurs — and these other "residents" keep all other populations in check, including the human population. To the mages of the Council, people are just a link in a larger chain, not the proverbial "pinnacle of achievement." For the most part, you're on your own here. People help each other, but human survival is not the ultimate measure of Horizon's worth.

The Realm's entire human population totals approximately 30 thousand (most Earth cities, by contrast, hold populations of at least 20 thousand). Most of this is concen-



Spirits and Spirit Magick

Otherworldly Realms rarely have Umbrascapes of their own. Horizon is no exception. Spirit magick works a bit differently here than it does on Earth; although spirits do exist in Horizon, they're visible to the mortal eye if you know how to look.

As shamans know, spirits inhabit all things. In Horizon, a person with the right training (Cosmology, Enigmas or Spirit Lore) can see the spirits within any material object. It's usually hard to notice them (Perception + one of the Abilities above, difficulty 9), but it can be done without using magick. This is akin to gazing at a picture until the hidden pattern emerges; some people get it right away, while others stare at the picture all day and never get a clear view. When noticed, the Umbrood (usually slumbering, but not always) resembles some camouflaged being overlaid on the item. Think of those insects that resemble tree bark or twigs — until they move....

Aside from nature spirits, few Umbrood inhabit the Realm unless they're invited (or sneak in). Mystick barriers around Horizon keep unwanted intruders from wandering through from the spirit world. Once there, a visiting spirit is visible but immaterial (see below) unless it chooses to hide. Horizon has no Gauntlet; the land itself is as vibrant as its Penumbra would be. Any Effect which has to penetrate that barrier is probably redundant. Stepping sideways isn't possible — there's no "sideways" to enter! To leave Horizon, a mage must use one of the portals or backdoors. Even Master-level Spirit magick has a hard time penetrating the magickal barriers around Horizon; consider any attempt to break through the Realm's "dreamshell" to be at difficulty 10.

Ephemera and ectoplasm remain materials unto themselves; you may be able to see an Umbrood without using Spirit Sight, but you won't be able to touch it without using magick. The reverse is also true; unless it utilizes some Charm, the spirit cannot touch you. The Umbrood's immunity to Life and Matter spells remains intact, and all its Charms work normally; most other Spheres, however, work as well against a spirit in the Realm as they would against any solid entity. Advanced Spirit magick can erect a temporary Gauntlet out of ephemera, drawing it out of nearby objects and weaving it into "solid" shapes. Effects like **Psychic Sterilization** and **Gauntlet Prison** work as well as they would elsewhere, but they construct a visible barrier out of spirit-stuff rather than from the Gauntlet. Damage, of course, still removes Power unless the Umbrood has **Materialized**. In short, unless you use magick, you can see an Umbrood, but you'll have a hard time having much effect on it.

From a storytelling perspective, Spirit magick is flashy stuff in Horizon. Ephemera glows in vibrant colors when it's actively used, and the mage summoning such Arts blazes with bright aura-colors. The very winds seem to whisper secrets when the spirits stir, and the passions evoked by a simple rousing spell permeate the very air. The spirit world doesn't hide in Horizon — if you know how to look for it, it's as real as this book, and far more active....

trated in Concordia, which has an estimated population of 15 thousand people, give or take a few hundred. The mages, by most accounts, number about 150 counting visitors. The majority of these are Adept level or lower, but two dozen or so count their years in centuries. While most of these archmages live in Concordia, a few make their homes in Horizon's far-off reaches. We leave these mysterious personages secret. Their identities and powers are for you, the Storyteller, to decide.

A Blueprint of the Realm

Horizon Realm's size alone marks it as one of the greatest Realms in existence, but its geography, politics, people and social structures also lend it a complexity that most other Realms never match.

Layout

The Primi, or ancient mages who founded the Realm, formed Horizon into a sphere the size of a small moon. Horizon Chantry and Concordia, the 15-mile-wide "City of Harmony" that surrounds it, sit at the center of Orbis Finiens, a roughly circular continent approximately 1200 miles in diameter, protected on all sides by the great Horizon Range. Two land bridges

(named Pax or "The Arm of Peace" and Robur, "The Arm of Strength") travel due east and west from Horizon Chantry to connect this continent to one roughly the same size and shape on the opposite side of the globe. Two oceans, Triton's Deep and the Arcturus — one mild and the other arctic — surround the continents, the land bridges and the islands dotting the northern and southern hemispheres. North of Concordia, the great Glacial Pools form Tass-laden firn fields on which yeti hunt. Moraine-dammed lakes teem with 50-pound freshwater fish and bizarre arctic aquatic life, while from the mountain heights, steep gorges and waterfalls plunge to the valley floor below. Three major rivers spring from the Glacial Pools: the frigid Essonne, the tepid Qi-Nagi and the boiling Msangesi. A tributary of the Qi-Nagi runs directly through Concordia to the south.

South of the Glacial Pools, the great northern timber forests begin, eventually leading to hill country. To Concordia's west, the rolling hills ease into champagne country and, to the extreme west in the region of the Pax Arm Bridge, desert emerges. To the east, acres upon acres of rolling hill country stretch toward Robur (the eastern land bridge), the climate growing gradually colder approaching the ocean. Occupying the extreme south, the mountains of the Cascades Region consist of porous rock, allowing the Msangesi, Qi-Nagi and

Essonne Rivers to penetrate its numerous underground caverns and empty into Triton's Deep, the southern ocean. This region is so named because of the number of beautiful waterfalls plunging from the mountain heights into the southern seas.

On the other side of the Realm lies the continent Posht, Arabic for "back." While the Traditions make great use of it now, for a long time Posht was considered frontier territory, much of its landscape harsher than that of its sister continent. Each Tradition has claimed a pie-slice of the continent for its own use, while considering the center, Mt. Apollo, a communal meeting place. Strange gravity bands encircle Mt. Apollo, causing everything there to be magnetized and often causing its inhabitants to float. The smaller mountains ringing Apollo are volcanically active, sending lava flows east toward a high plateau region. Sheer ridges resembling the mountains of Hawaii in both beauty and exoticism plummet from these plateaus. Recently, a huge earthquake shook the southern region of Posht, opening a vast rift 300 miles wide between the territories belonging to the Virtual Adepts and the Sons of Ether. Most Horizon mages speculate that whatever caused the mysterious sigil on the Council's 10th Seat to appear also caused this rift, which closely resembles the pie-sliced portions of Posht belonging to the other Traditions.

Mystickal Features

Horizon is not just a Chantry; it's also a magickal Realm filled with thousands of wondrous and dangerous things. A few examples of what mages might find are described below:

- **The Depthless Labyrinth:** An elaborate and beautiful system of grottos, caverns and tunnels twists through the rock beneath Horizon's Council Chambers. No one is sure why this labyrinth exists, what lives down there or when it was formed, but Council records indicate that the founding Primi did not create it. In 1896, two Dreamspeakers discovered that at least one set of tunnels led through the molten core of Horizon and out to Mt. Apollo on the other side. Further expeditions did not find the same path, but discovered exits to the mystickal islands of Triton's Deep and to the icy wastes of Daroum. Mages undertaking other explorations have reported fleeting glimpses of spirit palaces, sightings of magickal beasts and flora, living gemstones, bottomless ravines from which issued echoes of enchanting leys and ancient Tass entombed in crystalline rock. Some claim to have seen portals to faerie Realms and the High Umbra, reports which have the Medeans (the watchdog cabal) extremely concerned.

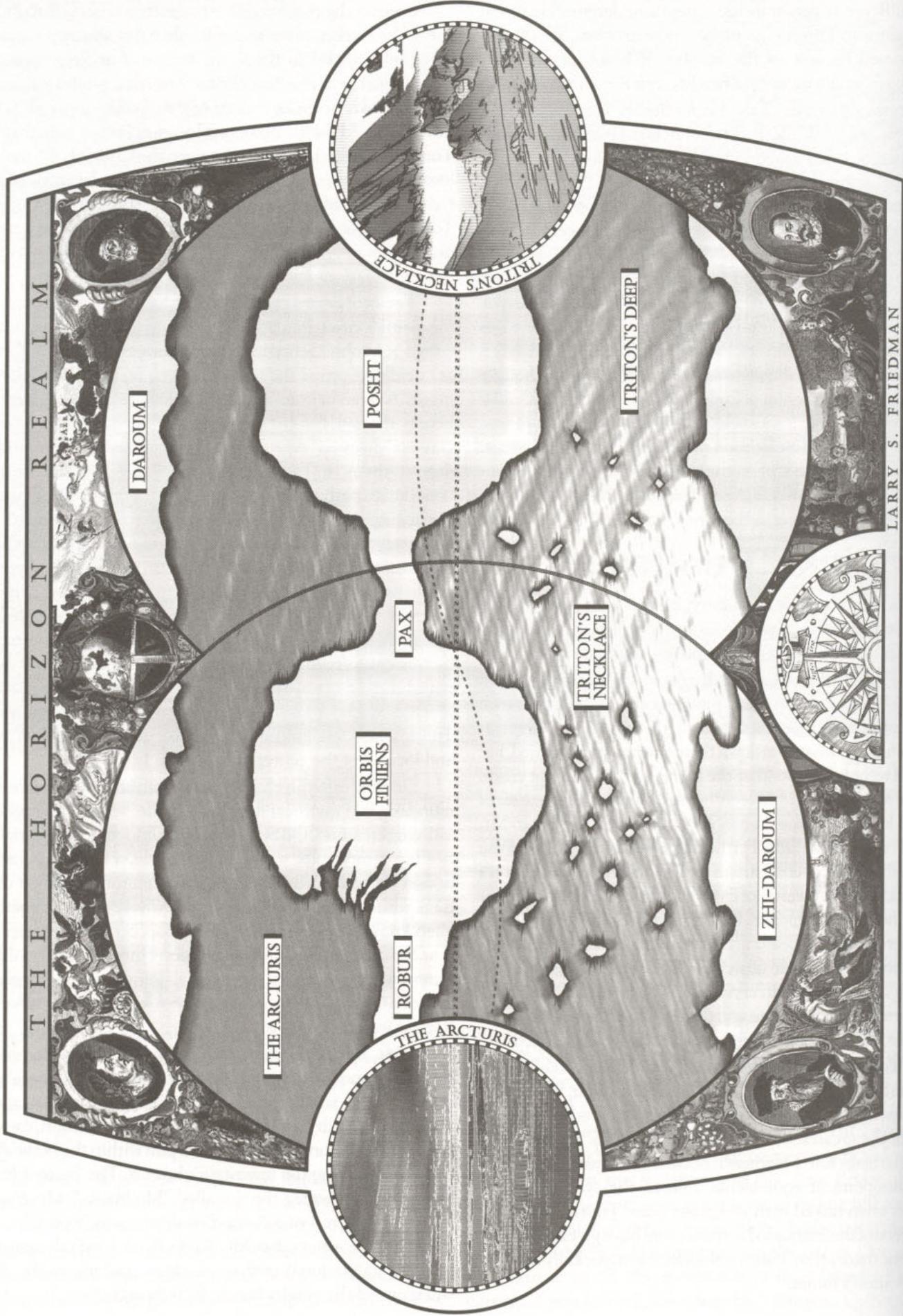
- **Triton's Necklace:** Within Triton's Deep, south of the two arm bridges connecting Orbis Finiens to Posht, lies a chain of 54 mystickal islands called Triton's Necklace, said to contain some of the greatest secrets of the Traditions. In 1626, the Hermetic mage Karl Magnussen noticed that these islands, like their astronomical equivalents, formed the symbols of the Spheres when linked with imaginary lines. Tunnels connecting several of the islands to Horizon's core have given rise to the Hermetic theory that Triton's Necklace is mystickally coupled with Horizon's future.

Certain islands attract more mages than others. Liathghorm Isle entices seekers of the secret Tomb of Ancients, a powerfully magickal site said to house the bodies of ancient mysticks, including a few of Horizon's Primi. The Isle contains Ancient's Cave, known to evoke visions of this Tomb, although it has never revealed the Tomb's exact location (some claim that the Tomb is so well hidden that not even the Council of Nine can locate it; others consider the whole thing a legend). Mages trying to determine the cave's mystickal connections with the Tomb have only succeeded in following their Prime emanations to the southwest Cascades Region of Orbis Finiens before these emanations apparently "dissolve."

The ecosystems on the Isles of Kurukulai and Katakana balance Horizon Realm's existence within the enormously complex Umbral ecosystem surrounding it. Prides of *ka'anshi*, or "voidlife," prowl the isles' outskirts, preying upon visiting mages' Avatars or lesser shards of life essence. Early in Horizon's history, the now-defunct Ansaz-wi cabal discovered that *ka'anshi* convert "digested" Avatars into vast Quintessence outputs and deposit them as Tass clouds just outside Horizon Realm's boundaries, perhaps to feed Umbrood there the way a mother bird regurgitates food for her young. The Ansaz-wi constructed a Correspondence Funnel that reintroduced this Tass into Horizon and began a covert program of feeding captured Orphans to the *ka'anshi* as a Node substitute. When the Council of Nine discovered this horrific practice, it called for a Just Gilgul: an enacting of Gilgul appropriate to the crime—in this case, feeding the Ansaz-wi to the *ka'anshi* for both punishment and restitution. The Council stored the Quintessence produced from the cabal's destruction in the enormous Talisman Caveat, an obsidian obelisk guarded by 17 *ka'anshi* and located at the center of Kurukulai Isle.

Other isles in this chain support both ancient and modern, mundane and mythical forms of wildlife, sentient beings and unliving creatures. On Saelie's Island, dinosaurs lay eggs rich in healing compounds, while Gravsten Isle, a tropical paradise, houses an advanced society of living plutonium-based creatures whose proximity is deadly, but whose culture venerates alien knowledge. Even the ocean floors between the isles are home to the beautiful, ghostly colonies of intelligent jellyfishlike *Juash*, while undersea geothermal vents, whose magickal outwash evokes euphoric epiphanies, lead one way to other Realms in the Tellurian.

- **Mt. Apollo:** Located at the center of Posht, the extinct strato-volcano known as Mt. Apollo rises some 7333 feet above sea level and is surrounded on all sides by smaller, active volcanoes. Gravity bands encircle the great mountain, causing strange fluctuations in gravitational pull within the network of chambers riddling the mountain's bowels. The Sons of Ether have kindly provided the so-called "Mudroom," which contains row upon row of one-size-fits-all anti-grav boots (Pity the poor Disciple assigned as Mt. Apollo's cobbler!) designed to prevent gravitational mishaps, such as crashing to the floor when one of the gravity bands shifts its pull.



O R B I S F I N I E N S

THE ARCTURIS

GREAT HORIZON RANGE

GLACIAL POOLS

SLEEPING GIANT INLETS

NORTHERN TIMBER FORESTS

THE ARCH OF HYPNOS

ARCH OF HYPOS

ROBUR



PAX

MSANGEST

CONCOR DIA

IDRINIOS TOR

TRITON'S DEEP

CASCADES REGION

DESERT

HILLS

MOUNTAINS

MOORS

LARRY S. FRIEDMAN

Nine air elevators — magickal elevators supporting travelers on cushions of air — lead to various laboratories, dormitories, refectories and even gardens within the volcano. The 10th elevator travels straight down the extinct volcanic conduit into a vast, dried magma chamber striped with scheelite deposits which fluoresce brightly under Chorus-provided UV light. The two-mile wide magma chamber serves as a meeting place for large convocations, usually annual, single-Tradition assemblies and Council addresses to the Traditions. Some 23 mages — a few visiting and many resident — live within Mt. Apollo, conducting experiments, using it as a base for explorations of their Traditions' sectors or simply relaxing, enjoying the tremendous view and time away from the library.

• **Gaia's Vortex:** Northwest of Concordia, the meandering Essonne enters the northern timber forests and forks into two branches. In the depths of the forest, the northerly branch gives way to numerous brooks, pools, ponds and creeks. Gaia's Vortex, one such pool, can be found in an enchanted grotto guarded by three river nymphs and a water elemental. The Vortex is humble — only about 10 feet in diameter — but it is of such magickal purity that a sip from it will forever stave off thirst. However, the Vortex is also mystically tied into the essence of Earth's waters — a weakness, some mages believe, resulting from Horizon's ties to the water Nodes Scylla and Charibdes. Should the Vortex ever be polluted, Earth's waters would, over the course of a decade or so, also become undrinkable. Horizon mages discovered this when a group of errant Solificati experimented on the Vortex and found that the very same chemicals they had been using were filtering out into the oceans near the coasts of Portugal and Finland. As a result, the Council allows the nymphs and elemental to guard the Vortex as they see fit — and they are indeed capable guardians — but also encourages those mages, the Dreamspeakers, Verbena and Akashics in particular, who may be leery of this arrangement to post guards in the Vortex's region.

• **The Sleeping Giant:** The desert wastes of Keyhole Pass mark the site of one of the greatest Umbral battles in magickal history. The Primi, intent on creating Horizon within this region of the Umbra, combined their might to defeat Urúshlakhg'run, a colossal Umbrood whose territory included what was to later become Horizon. The Primi enchain the titan with thousands of intricate wards and sigils, then funneled its Quintessence into the volcanic energies necessary to form the Horizon Range. Urúshlakhg'run still lives, enchain beneath the Alps at Keyhole Pass, its fiery Quintessence heating Robur and the surrounding region into desert terrain, smoldering rock plains and boiling geysers.

• **The Arch of Hypnos:** A mammoth girasol span of unknown origin, the Arch of Hypnos was transported to Horizon as a gift from the Ahl-i-Batin. It is said that words whispered beneath its keystone influence the dreams of rulers of all nations back on Earth. While hard evidence has not yet corroborated this rumor, Doissetep has been trying for centuries to win this artifact from the Council. The Arch spans the point where the Great Trident forks into the Msangesi, Qi-Nagi and Essonne Rivers. A giant river serpent is also said to inhabit the waters there.

Defenses

Though not as solidly fortified as Doissetep, Horizon can still summon many forms of defense should the need arise.

Aside from its guardians and the Virtual Adepts' new information network, Horizon's first line of defense is the Horizon Range itself: Quintessence gathered from strange sources within the Umbra charges the air around the peaks. A Forces Discharger, created by the Sons of Ether and located in their Horizon Surveillance Barracks, can discharge ungodly amounts of electricity in the air above the Horizon Range at a moment's notice. (25 dice, aggravated damage. Attacks roll seven dice against difficulty 9 for human-sized targets, 7 for larger ones.)

The second line of defense consists of the voracious appetites of the beasts who inhabit the Range: 70-foot-long wyrms, fire-breathing dragons, tusked ogres, swarms of mind-numbing winged larvae, fanged yeti, carnivorous plants, flesh-eating griffins and so forth. Horizon's mages do not necessarily control these beasts; rather, the animals naturally attack and feed on territorial intruders. In addition to these natural defenses, approximately 500 custos and 120 mages stand ready to defend the Realm, in addition to regular visitors (such as Porthos), their servants and innumerable other Chantries which owe Horizon favors.

Horizon also maintains a fleet of three Cloudships, armed with Ether Cannons and Entropic Torpedoes. Each Traditionwards the gate into Concordia for which it is responsible (maintaining card-passes into the city through that gate), while the Order of Hermes possesses the City Dome, a powerful Talisman that slides a crackling dome of Force over the entire city. During a breach, the Dome can also retract to cover just the Council Chambers and the Archives surrounding them.

One of the Council's most well-kept secrets is that, with the correct series of passwords spoken by each of the Council Members in turn, Saxum Oculorum funnels all the Quintessence entering Horizon via the Bastions and the Fenestrae (windows in the Council Dome) into a thick, slicing beam of pure magick. The beam may only be used once, or the Realm itself will begin to disintegrate. Although this mighty beam has the power to level mountains, it is not terribly precise, and thus can be aimed only at large attackers. While the Council has never needed the weapon, it is understatedly theorized that its power, derived from the combination of all nine Spheres, would be "enough to fend off most opponents."

Additionally, the Ways (see above) to Horizon shift at random intervals. The Virtual Adepts have created a program that not only encrypts the multiple passwords needed to open the portals, but also virtually "tangles" the ley lines leading to Horizon from its Nodes on Earth. The latter became necessary when a thrill-seeking group of Void Engineer explorers decided to follow the ley lines at Arches National Park into the Umbra to see where they led.

Horizon's Cloudships

A recent addition to Horizon's arsenal of Realm defense weapons, the Etherite-constructed Cloudships look like 30-yard-long deep-sea submarines bristling with cannons and torpedo tubes. Used in both air and water defense, these airborne submersible craft are outfitted with four batteries of five Ether Cannons each, nine smaller laser and sonar cannons, 20 Entropic Torpedoes, two Time Harpoons, and four Hyperspeed Steam Engines, as well as sensors, life support and communications devices.

The Sons of Ether have armored the vessels with two layers of five-inch Gummed Ether plating (patent pending) which absorbs most shocks (effectively worth 15 Health Levels), can slide off like a second skin in emergencies, and boasts a special Anti-Force Granulation Process (subtract five successes from any Forces magick used against it). The latter also enables the Cloudships to navigate through the Horizon Range electricity barrier that the Etherite Forces Discharger activates. In dire situations, the Cloudship captain can open the Battle Gate, a portal 70 yards in diameter that sends the embattled ship and its enemies elsewhere in the Umbra.

Cloudships have limited travel capabilities within the Umbra; as they expend Quintessence from their batteries quite rapidly, they tend to stay within Horizon Realm if possible. To operate at maximum efficiency, Cloudships require a crew of four mages and 15 acolytes trained in weaponry usage.

- **Ether Cannon:** Arete 8, Quintessence 40. Ship-mounted emplacements, Ether Cannons focus thin, slicing beams of raw energy at the target (Forces 4/Prime 2). With a Quintessence expenditure of three per shot, Ether Cannons are good for 13 shots, after which their "Ether reserves" (Quintessence batteries) must be recharged. Gunners roll Dexterity + Technology (difficulty 9 for human-sized targets, 7 for ships and other large targets).

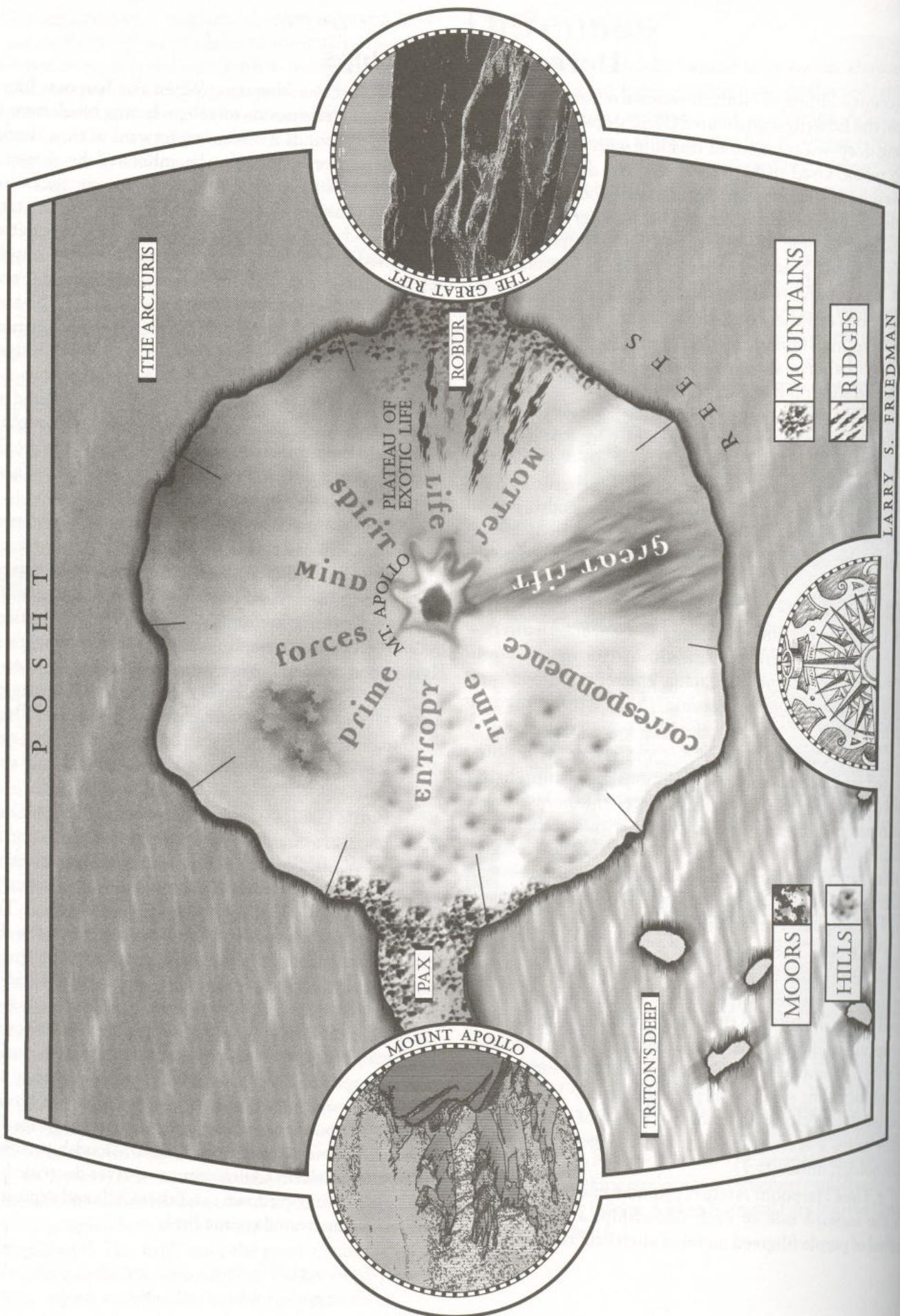
- **Entropic Torpedo:** Arete 5, Quintessence 5. Each Cloudship contains four Entropic Torpedo tubes capable of berthing up to three torpedoes each. Encased in Prime-tipped metal sheathings, these torpedoes lodge themselves in ship hulls, sending shock waves of Entropic force through the ship to disrupt computer, navigational, life support and communications systems (as per the Entropy 3 Effect Slay Machine). Each torpedo burns five points of Quintessence and requires a crew of two to hit the target (Dexterity + Technology, difficulty 7).

- **Time Harpoon:** Arete 8, Quintessence 20. Mounted on the leeward side of each Cloudship, a harpoon gun crafted of purple filigreed metal of alien origin stands ready

to release its Time Harpoon. When the harpoon hits its target, a signal releases its metal anchoring block from the Cloudship and sends it screaming forward in time through temporal territory known to be inhabited by dangerous Time spirits. Without warning, the harpoon flicks itself forward in time, using its barbed prongs to drag its target along behind it. This is not only dangerous for craft not constructed for temporal travel, but for the crew as well; a high-pitched, mind-shredding klaxon, inescapable to those without Mind magick (Time 5/Mind 3), follows the target on its "journey." The harpoon (and victim) will continue to time travel until stopped. The effects on an invading ship have never been battle-tested, but the Scientists theorize that the ship and crew will become one atom-scattered mass hurtling through endless null-space. Those who might escape would be incurably mad. Cloudship captains use their Time Harpoons only in dire emergency, since there are no replacements once expended.

- **Hyperspeed Steam Engine:** Arete 7, Quintessence 30. At the center of every Cloudship lies a generator room containing five Ether Cells which function as batteries, storing up to 50 Quintessence each. Aft of the generator room, the steam room contains two Etherite contraptions of hulking, whistling, pumping, steam-discharging metal: the Hyperspeed Steam Engine and its backup. This engine allows the Cloudship to travel near lightspeed (Correspondence 5), but burns Quintessence from the Ether Cells at an alarming rate: Each jump costs 30 Quintessence and necessitates a two-hour cooling period before the engines can be used again.

- **Battle Gate:** Arete 9, Quintessence 100. A Control Room panel of switches, flashing lights, turn-keys and signs that say "WARNING" in 50 different languages activates the Battle Gate, a portal into alternate Umbral space large enough to swallow and destroy two large ships. A Trans-Umbral Projector projects Quintessence from the Ether Cells in the Generator Room to a 70-yard-wide space 15 yards in front of the ship's nose (Correspondence 5/Prime 3). The portal creates no visible effect, although Prime-sensing devices will pick up faint traces of its outline. Cloudship captains use the Battle Gate tactically, usually to entice dangerous craft away from Horizon where they can be dispatched or disoriented. Such tactics also give Horizon's defenders time to regroup or set up defenses. Things do not usually work out so well for the Gated Cloudship, however, since its permanent Quintessence reserves decrease by 100 (effectively shutting down two Ether Cells and exposing the ship to concentrated enemy fire).



Visitors' Guide



Though each must choose his own Way, it seems our courses have converged. Let us travel together for a time, trading thoughts.

—Brother Cheng Sa to the Grand Convocation, Summer Solstice 1466.

Horizon mages, though used to the priceless magickal treasures that surround them daily, still feel a sense of wonder whenever they stop to consider them. They're delighted when visitors remark on the beauty of their Realm, and sometimes even interrupt their own important business to show off local landmarks.

Landmarks

Most museums and landmarks are open to visitors 24 hours a day. Some sacred or special sites, such as the Kanisa waKweli and the Arci Intorti, are open only upon invitation or with special permission. It is suggested that visitors obtain *The Sites Guide*, available from Nichodemus Mulhouse at the Archives, before setting out.

Etiquette

People in Horizon are generally courteous and friendly, unless visitors barge into their homes or subrealms without permission. Residents are very proud of the magickal land in which they live and they delight in showing visitors around.

• **Do's:** Visitors should be aware of certain protocol to which they are expected to adhere. Perhaps the most important tradition is that of name proclamation. Whenever visitors to the Realm enter a public building they've never entered before, they're expected to state their names and their Tradition affiliations ("Juliette Amber bani Verbena at your service, and these are my friends, Laird Mack bani Virtual Adepts..."). This tradition is a holdover from the Proclamation Ritual, a common courtesy during the busy days of Horizon's construction when most mages did not know each other. In practice, it's usually acceptable to speak with the owner of the building; loudly announcing these facts to the first person one meets will earn you a strange look at the least. Neglecting this protocol may result in complications as minor as stand-offishness or as severe as spying accusations.

It's also considered good form to report to Nichodemus Mulhouse or one of his assistants at the Archives shortly after your arrival. Visitors should bring some gift of knowledge for Master Mulhouse's Archives. In exchange, Mulhouse usually has one of his assistants give visitors a tour of the Archives.

• **Don'ts:** Never touch another mage's familiar without both the mage's and the familiar's permission. Feuds have erupted over such mistakes in the past.

Visitors should also be aware that certain bars, libraries and other buildings do not allow acolytes. A movement to rid Horizon of segregation arose in the 1960s, but certain older, influential mages owning the buildings in question have not yet conceded. Punishments for violating owner-controlled segregation in the past have included certámen (in which the older mage almost always wins); wiping the acolyte's mind; exiling the acolyte and/or the mage from Horizon; and assigning the acolyte to the building owner for a year's free work. Segregated buildings usually post signs outside in several languages and provide smaller facilities for acolytes around back.

Finally, visitors should *never* wear white in November (by Horizon's calendar). White clothing worn then symbolizes support of Heylel Teomim Thoabath's reprehensible actions during the March of Nine. When allowed to wear anything, Thoabath (the Great Betrayer, who many considered a Nephandus) wore white throughout his trial to protest the Council's folly. His supporters did the same to mock the Council during and after the trial. While such passions run cooler nowadays, certain Horizon mages still remember the proceedings or have learned the symbolism. These mages, as justified by archaic Council Law, may gravely wound or even kill white-garbed mockers of the Council's mission.

Lodgings

Many dormitories exist for visiting mages. Advance reservations are wise, however, since spaces fill up quickly during festivals and holy days. (More important mages generally find free accommodations with colleagues or their custos.)

Numerous pavilions, pueblos, pagodas, yurts, wigwams and tholos are scattered about Concordia and outlying regions. The following lodgings, however, have traditionally been most popular:

• **The Red Griffin Inn:** This inn's reputation as a rowdy night spot has not diminished in modern times. Whereas in the past the Red Griffin functioned as an intimate assembly hall for Hermetics, nowadays Dreamspeakers, Ecstatics, Verbena, Virtual Adepts and—oddly—Sons of Ether frequent the Red Griffin Inn. The inn accommodates up to 20 customers at a time and features a well-fed, live griffin chained to the wall. Prices are reasonable, the food is good and the drinks are better. The inn's staff dresses in 16th-century garb and speaks in authentic Middle English dialect (as opposed to bad Renaissance Festival accents).

• **Caernaeth Castle:** Located on the outskirts of the algarroba groves outside the Crystal Bastions, Caernaeth Castle's 64 suites accommodate visiting dignitaries from

various Traditions and Umbral cultures. A beautiful Gothic structure, the castle's octagonal towers and deep moat (protected by the 19-foot winged serpent Sarnath) attract travelers as well as sightseers. While prices are steep (40 naivid a night and up; see "Exchange and Currency"), the rooms and food are both of fine quality.

• **Pink Petal Grove:** An Edenic grove located on the outskirts of the Life Ward, far from the bustle of the Council Chambers and business districts. Here, apple trees and flowering dogwoods form petalled bowers that shelter guests

in cool shade. Patches of soft moss form cushioned beds on which to sleep, while birds sing sweetly in the trees overhead. No insects or wildlife bother guests, and the temperature rarely exceeds 70°F. Thick dwarf bushes laden with succulent apricots, nectarines, persimmons and figs offer guests both privacy and food. The "staff," if they may be called such, drift in and out of view, silent, barefoot and wrapped in filmy garments. Visitors never discover whether their hosts are humans, spirits, constructs or illusions.

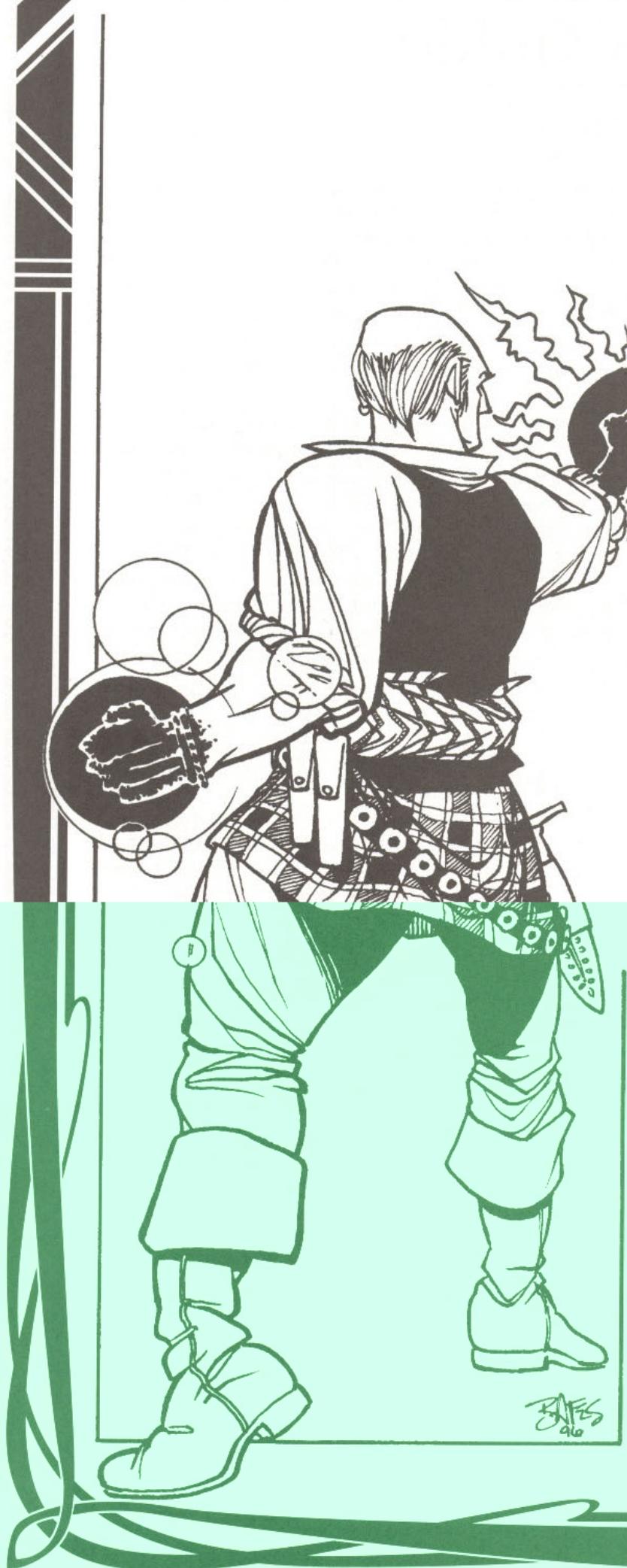
Best of all, the Pink Petal Grove is cheap; five naivid a night per person, including food.

• **Cloud 9:** Beautiful clouds of purple haze float above the textile district within the Forces Ward. Owned and operated by members of the Circle of Artemis cabal, Cloud 9 offers individual and double "clouds" (cloud-beds of heavenly comfort screened from prying eyes by walls of violet smoke). Like certain other magickal establishments on Horizon, Cloud 9 runs off a private Node that is taxed 50 Quintessence a year and is subject to the proviso that the Council may take control of the Node under "dire circumstances." The guests' fees reflect these operating costs: 50 naivid (or 10 Quintessence) a night for a single, 90 naivid (or 15 Quintessence) for a double. Nevertheless, visitors claim that the night's sleep they get on the clouds is well worth the exorbitant fee.

• **Walking Buffalo Hogan:** Located in the Spirit Ward, this huge log and mud dwelling accommodates up to 50 guests. The hogan's interior magickally remains at a comfortable temperature whether or not its occupants light fires inside, and there is never a shortage of thick buffalo skins and beautifully crafted Navajo blankets on which to sleep. The innkeeper, a Lakota storyteller named Rain Stonefoot, is a witty gentleman with an avid taste for new tales and a rolling deep voice. His wife, Helena Wingstag, cultivates herbs from across the Tellurian. Their food alone at the Wild Buffalo Hogan is well worth a night's stay, and the prices are quite good; Rain would rather obtain services, goods or interesting tales than cash.

Police

Horizon's police force is minimal, since most of its inhabitants do not disobey the few laws that exist. Breaking



them is often more trouble than it's worth — mages tend to handle their own affairs....

Occasionally, a custos steals something of value from a mage's household or an upset familiar vandalizes a landmark. In these cases, police acolytes follow the same procedures as police in Earth's United States do. If the crime involves magick, a Disciple may be assigned to the investigation. Ultimately, the police answer to the cabal known as the Medeans, but the cabal's involvement is highly discouraged.

Police dress has varied through the centuries. In the 1950s, the Medeans experimented briefly with plain-clothed police, but found that Concordia's population began to resent the growing paranoia that this stirred. Nowadays, police can be identified by their black uniforms and caps, and the gold sigils of office on their chests. Rarely do they carry more than a stungun at their sides, and all of them are trained in multiple forms of martial arts by an Akashic.

For more information on Horizon's justice system, see "Law."

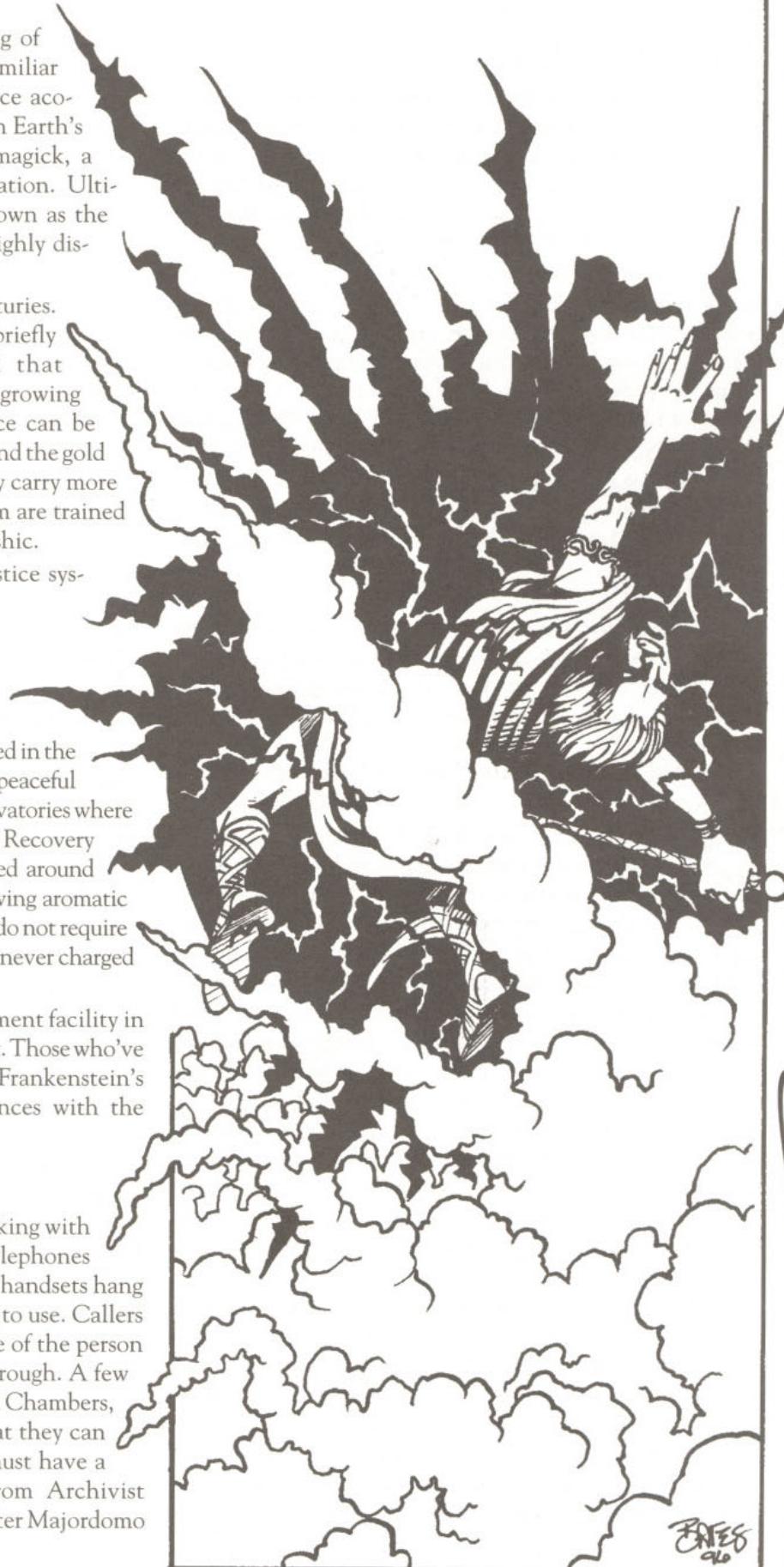
Medicine

The Verbena have established a number of infirmaries throughout Horizon, posting Adepts there in shifts. These infirmaries, located in the Life, Spirit, Prime and Time Wards, are small, peaceful villas with tiled courtyards, gardens and conservatories where many of the herbs used in treatments are grown. Recovery rooms, always comfortable affairs, are designed around natural springs; small, tiered garden plots growing aromatic plants; and lots of sunlight. While most mages do not require the Verbena's services, custos often do and are never charged a fee.

The Sons of Ether have their own treatment facility in the Matter Ward, called Graftenburg's Retreat. Those who've been there have another name for it: Doc Frankenstein's Place. Most non-Etherites take their chances with the Verbena.

Communication

In recent years, the Virtual Adepts, working with the Sons of Ether, set up a system of telephones throughout the Realm. These bright orange handsets hang from the sides of buildings and cost nothing to use. Callers simply announce into the receiver the name of the person whom they wish to contact, and they get through. A few telephones, mostly those within the Council Chambers, are marked with purple sigils, indicating that they can connect with Earth. To use these, callers must have a Trans-Umbral Calling Card (obtained from Archivist Mulhouse for the fee of five Quintessence, after Majordomo



Lucenik performs a background check) and must know the number of the person whom they wish to reach.

Transportation

Visitors can avail themselves of various forms of mundane transportation within Concordia. While walking and horse-drawn carriages and carts are most popular, especially with older mages who can't walk the often steep hills of the city, some solar shuttle vans run from the Crystal Bastions to the foot of the Siúinéir. Most mages find mundane transportation unnecessary, but sometimes they enjoy the scenic ride. Shops throughout the city offer flying carpet and sedan rentals (10 naivid, or two Quintessence, per day, with waiver of liability), Ruby Slipper Transporters (20 N, or four Q/day), Dr. Seuss' Purple Woobenhooper Sleds for the young of heart (10 N, or two Q/hour) and winged mount rides (20 N, or four Q/day, kids ride for free!). Dangerous beasts such as griffins and dinosaurs — otherwise excellent transportation — are not allowed inside Concordia's gates unless chained or caged. Outside the city, anything goes.

Festivals

Because of the wide range of cultures that Horizon's mages represent, visitors have a very good chance of encountering some sort of festival during their stay. Festivals include both mundane events — Beltaine, Easter, Twelfth Night, Mayday, St. Swithin's Day, Kumbh Mela, Lammas, All Soul's Day, the Realm Kite Rendevous, the Sand Castle Contest and so forth — and many colorful celebrations of life adapted from magickal rituals, only a few of which follow:

• **Great Festival of Horizon (April 30th+):** The celebration to attend, this festival commemorates Horizon's founding in 1456. Vast holographic representations of Horizon's Primis finishing construction on the Realm are projected onto the night sky; heraldic banners hang from every window; custos colorfully garbed in outrageous magickal costumes dance through Concordia's streets in mile-long processions; mulled wine, love potions and heady life elixirs flow from bottomless liquid cornucopias; tables buckle under trays laden with hot braised beef, saffron-tossed rice, boiled swan, thick cheeses, unicorn and griffin subtleties, sugar wafers and jellies. Even the ordinarily somber Council Chambers echo with beautiful music, laughter and sounds of the feast, the floors strewn with tender flower petals, the glowing ley lines made visible to the naked eye.

When the third moon rises in the east, each member of the Council confers a blessing on Horizon — and then the real festivities begin. Fae often appear, their means of entry unnoticed (though under ordinary circumstances, those charged with Horizon's security would be *very* worried). Mages and custos can be seen wrestling dragons, soaring through the night sky, dancing at the bottom of lakes and playing leapfrog through time. Mages go party-hopping in

other Traditions' subrealms, on Triton's Necklace and on Mt. Apollo. The festivities last as long as everyone wishes them to — usually about 14 days, sometimes longer. Each night a different Tradition is celebrated (or commemorated, as is the case with the Ahl-i-Batin and even the Solificati). When the Traditions have been exhausted, the unity of the whole is celebrated.

- **The Petal-Queen Festival (June 1):** Held in the Gardens of Sruth na Mbláth every year, this holiday celebrates springtime with great festivity and pageantry. Simulacri of a king and queen magickally constructed of fresh spring petals sit atop a petal throne, while mages dance, talk, feast and make love in the gardens by the Qi-Nagi. The Verbena offer a prize to the mage who invents and implements the best plan to improve Sleepers' environmental awareness on Earth.

- **The Festival of Light (December 15th):** Commemorating the marriage of Naioba and Star-of-Eagles in 1456 — a symbolic union for the Traditions — mages throughout Horizon light candles from continent to continent, on land and undersea, to symbolize hope for the new year. Legend has it that Naioba, like the sun, bore Star-of-Eagles three children, Horizon's three moons, who carried on her mission of hope even after she died. At dawn, mages extinguish the candles throughout the whole Realm to honor Naioba as she is reborn in full glory in the east.

- **Feast of Blades (October 27th):** A holdover from a rougher age and a fit prelude to Halloween festivities, the Feast of Blades pits mage against mage in a contest of magickal skill. Tables are laden with swords and daggers, which, as in a pie-eating contest, the contestants eat as quickly as possible. The key is to transform the blades into harmless nutrients before they slice your throat open (Matter 3, or Matter 3/Life 2; difficulty 8 due to stress. Making them disappear with Correspondence or Time is considered bad form). The winner becomes King or Queen of the Grotesque during Halloween festivities.

- **The Griffin Rodeo (September 16th):** Mages and consorts wishing to prove their skill convene at the annual Griffin Rodeo to cling tightly to the backs of those untamed, bucking birds — or beasts? — of the air. Winners receive a pet griffin or the right to judge the next year's contest.

Heraldry

Examples of elaborate heraldic banners and coats of arms abound in Horizon, found in ancient mage's households, hanging over portals to Tradition-affiliated buildings, and, during festivals and other celebrations, decorating battlements along the Crystal Bastions and the warded windows of the Archive building. The Council of Nine's banner features a field d'or adorned with a unicorn argent armed and statant. Surrounding the unicorn are nine smaller red lions, rampant and respectful of the unicorn.

Exchange and Currency

Although a common currency exists, the majority of exchanges throughout Horizon are done through barter. Barter for services, for goods, or for magicks, but never for land or resources — the mages who established (and for all practical purposes, who govern) the Realm have learned a harsh lesson from earthly affairs. Food, art, clothing and tools or utensils are the most favored trade goods; sooner or later, most people need them.

The common currency, navids (indicated by an "N"), comes in denominations of one-half, one, three, five, nine, 10, 30, 50, 90 and 100. Each navid token is an engraved coin representing one of the Spheres, while the 100-navid coin portrays the nine original Primi in a minuscule tableau (the politicking to see whose face ended up on the higher denominations resulted in this awkward compromise). The coins' worth is as follows. One dram of Tass equals a point of Quintessence. To avoid complicated exchange procedures, Storytellers can simply consider 1 N the equivalent of a dollar (or whatever your local currency might be) when assessing its general worth.

Value	Color	Image	Tass worth (in drams)
1/2 N	bronze	Entropy	0
1 N	gold	Prime	0
3 N	blue	Mind	0
5 N	white	Spirit	1 D
9 N	red	Forces	1 1/2 D
10 N	deep blue	Matter	2 D
30 N	green	Life	6 D
50 N	violet	Correspondence	10 D
90 N	black	Time	18 D
100 N	pearl-escent	Primi	20 D

Magick, of course, makes counterfeiting easy; as a result, few merchants take coin from known wizards. Instead, they charge Tass or services — often the latter, especially if the merchant is an un-Awakened citizen. Earth cash may be exchanged for navids in various places throughout Concordia, but this gets more difficult outside the city's borders. The penalty for counterfeiting coins or defrauding citizens with magickally produced goods is expulsion from the Realm.

Outlying Communities

Although Concordia is the largest population center in Horizon, it's certainly not the only one. Many villages lie outside the Crystal Bastions: ancestral homes to families of custos, farm communities, residences, laboratories or simply vacation spots.

Most of the outlying communities govern themselves. So long as no community imposes its lifestyle on another (through

war, slave trade, pollution or religious fanaticism), residents are free to do as they will. Those who don't like their local customs have plenty of places to go. Every once in a while, one community will attack another, or fall under despotic rule. Complainants usually take their case to Concordia — or to a local mage. If a problem gets out of hand, the Medeans will arrive to deal with the offenders. Tyrants or other undesirables are usually expelled (if they survive the fight), and their communities are scattered. This rather Darwinian social control has many critics throughout Horizon, but in 500 years, no one has found a more practical alternative.

The outlying communities include nomadic bands, private manor houses and traditional villages from a dozen different cultures. A few of the larger towns and villages include:

Clarion (approx. pop.: 1500)

This tiny 15th-century hill town with a small castle, church and cobblestone streets lies about 30 miles northeast of Concordia along the Essonne River. The ancient Hermetic Master Anania Divraniya owns Dvorec 'Cverdvinsk, the 17th-century castle where she conducts her studies and occasionally holds meetings with other members of the Order of Sanguine Souls. A large population of the town's ancestral custos work for Divraniya. Visitors to the Porhov Inn at the center of town shouldn't miss the *voduval*, a frosted drink consisting of vodka, Tass gathered from the northern Glacial Pools and gooseberry juice.

R̄as Jiwani (approx. pop.: 1250)

A fishing village of caves and houses nestled in the slopes of the Cascade Mountains southwest of Concordia, R̄as Jiwani overlooks the waters of Triton's Deep. Its population consists primarily of Middle Eastern custos left behind by the Ahl-i-Batin. A great waterfall, the Seliz, plunges through the center of the village, while three dry caves emerging from the rock behind the waterfall serve as meeting places for village elders and as lodging for travelers. Visitors should always wait to be asked if they would like to lodge in these caves; elders consider it offensive to be propositioned.

Trinité (approx. pop.: 3400)

Located 10 miles west of Concordia, Trinité is a large 16th-century Chorister monastery around which a town grew. While the Celestial Chorus still exerts a large influence on the town, nowadays Trinité is better known for its artistic community — particularly for its glassware and Tass artisans. A small population of American and French Ecstatics also lives here.

Bancaern (approx. pop.: 2000)

Located on the plains south of Concordia, Bancaern is a large farming town that supports a third of Concordia's agricultural needs. One inn sits at the center of town, the Verbena-run Yoked Steer, which houses up to 15 visitors and offers the best food and drink in all of Horizon, despite Porthos' claims.

ILLUSTRATION NOT TO SCALE

C I T Y C O N C O R D I A
O F H A R M O N Y

A | COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND ARCHIVES

B | CHRYSAL BASTIONS

C | BRIDGES

a | GATE of CORRESPONDENCE

b | GATE of FORCES

c | GATE of MATTER

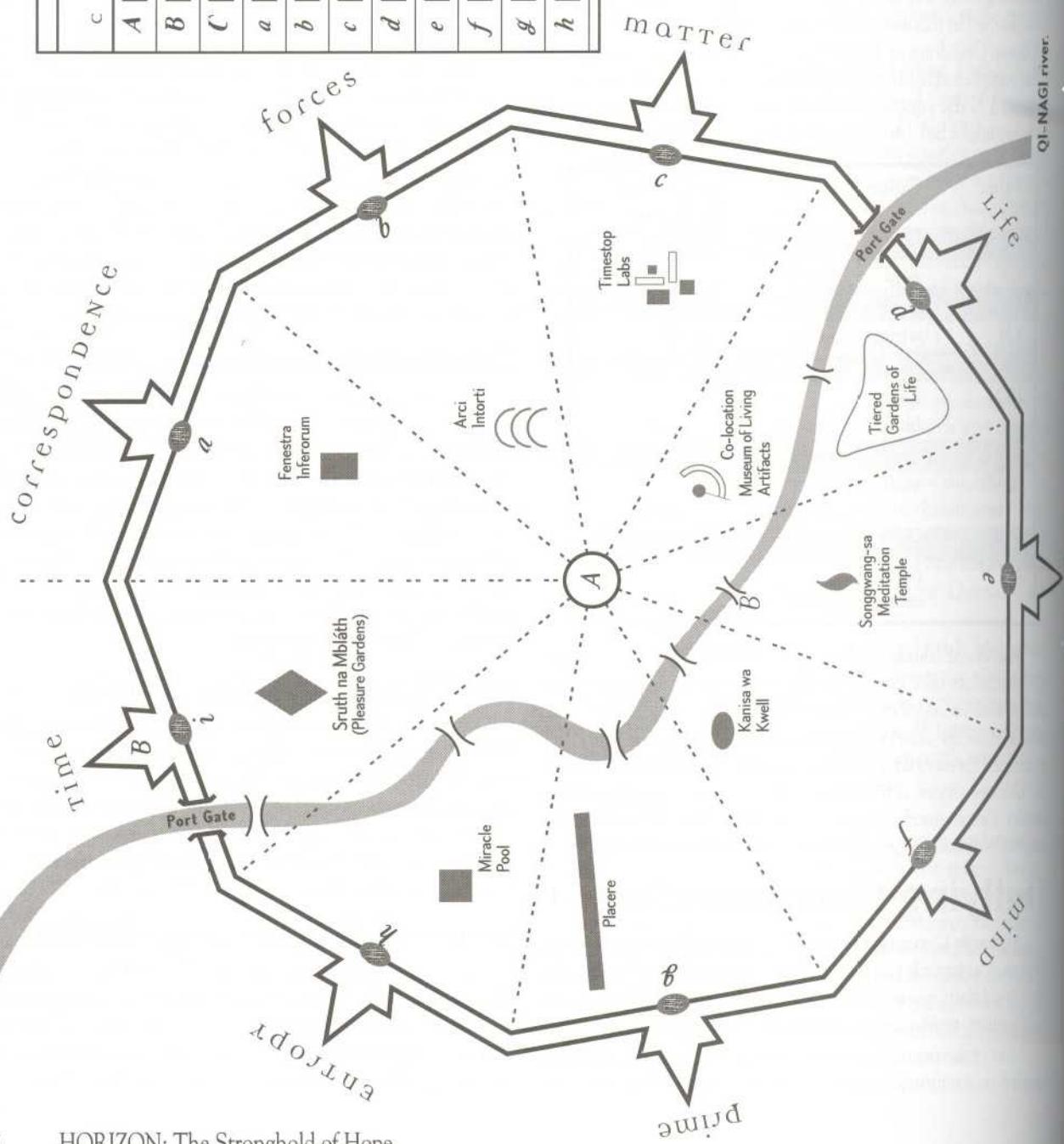
d | GATE of LIFE

e | GATE of SPIRIT

f | GATE of MIND

g | GATE of PRIME

h | GATE of ENTROPY



Concordia



1466. In this yeere yfounded was the Council of IX Mystique Tradicions on solstitium June at Horizontem for diverse resouns. And in this same yeere ydemed it was that I, Nichodemus clerk, wolde maketh this Book of Yeeres in recorde of oure fayre and worthy entente. Myne hande and mynde, beeth trewe. Amen.

—First entry in the Horizon Chronicle.

The true seat of the Council itself, Concordia surrounds the Council Chambers and supports the whole Realm's infrastructure. Most residents dwell in the city at least part of the time, and the few laws or arbitrations usually come through the high Ward courts that sit below the Council Chambers themselves.

No poverty exists in Concordia; everyone has more than enough to live well, and the mages see to it that no resident exploits another for long. Naturally, no city is perfect. People are people, and prejudices, addictions and petty crime remain part of any large community. For all practical purposes, Concordia is a benevolent monarchy run by the wizards — a colossal covenant run by a huge (and occasionally unstable) cabal. Those who prefer more freedom live outside the city in the outlying communities. Still, inside the city, plenty of food, goods and entertainment can be had, and the city's darkest sides are a far cry from the sordid streets of Earth.

The Nine Wards

Shortly after the fall of the First Cabal, the mages of Horizon allotted portions of Concordia to each Tradition to ease the governance issues in which bureaucracies always seem to entangle themselves. Accordingly, the city, which is almost 15 miles in diameter, forms nine Wards, each named after a Sphere of magick. While each Tradition appoints a *Regulus Regionis* (Chief of the Ward) to govern the mages, consors and other Ward-dwellers, governance is not an isolated duty; rather, the Council mages who oversee the nine Reguli encourage cross-Tradition assistance. Recently, the system has begun to work fairly well; Traditions award other Wards with gifts or assist in repairs when it is politic to do so. Because the Traditions often work together, Wards do not have isolated atmospheres; theoretically, no discrimination exists between Traditions within the Wards. The same cannot be said of the nine subrealms linked to Horizon Chantry; there, each Tradition has complete domain over activities and visitors (see "The Council Complex" and the nine subrealms described below).

Architectural Wonders

When Horizon was founded, each Tradition offered both a major Node and a gift as symbols of confidence in the Primi's mission of hope. As a result, magickal artifacts,

edifices, gardens and other structures dot Concordia's landscape. Some of the city's highlights include:

- **Council Chambers:** The lifeblood of the Traditions' cooperation effort, the Council Chambers were built by mages from all the Traditions in 1456 and have been steadily improved upon since then. See the "Council Chambers" section for more details.

- **The Diamond Wall:** Although no community in Horizon could pose a threat to Concordia, a huge stone wall surrounds the city anyway. When the Realm was constructed, such fortifications were the order of the day, especially since the threat of attack still existed until well into the 18th century. The Wall rises roughly 50' from the ground up, all solid stone carved into intricate designs. Despite its name, the Wall isn't actually made of diamonds, though the magnificent carvings remind one of a monumental jewel. Nine gates (the bastions mentioned in "Horizon's Nodes") lead into the Wards, one into each. Although the Wall is effectively useless against modern technology or magick, it remains a decorative holdover from Concordia's history.

- **Arci Intorti:** "The Spiral Arches." These three imposing arches — each 70 feet high and carved into spirals from huge specimens of crystal elm wood — sit at the center of the Forces Ward, a gift given by the Dijiionondo-wanenake Dreamspeakers to the Order of Hermes in 1477. Those standing under the Spiral Arches can peer into an Umbral well and conjoin minds with the spirits there. Caution is advised when using such magick, however. After the Hermetic mage Henri Angoulême joined minds with an alien spirit and went into permanent Quiet, the Order of Hermes posted guards who permit entry only to those with the appropriate sigil.

- **The Timestop Labs:** Built by the Ecstatics for the Sons of Ether in 1953, the Timestop Labs form a small campus in the western portion of the Matter Ward. The Etherites use these labs for research and development, since certain rooms are not subject to time. Amongst the Sons, competition to win a spot in the "TS Labs," as they are known, is fierce. Typically, only mages who have been prominent within the Sons for more than 90 years have a chance of receiving a room grant. A body of six Etherite mages, known as the Timestop Board, accepts applications every three years. Critics claim that the Board only offers positions to older mages whose work it already knows. The politics surrounding these positions irritate many younger Etherites: To become "known" to the Board, you must be published in *Paradigma*, experiment within a narrow band of research topics (the Board has a definite bias toward utopian experimentation) and, ironically, you must have worked under a Board member at the Timestop Labs. Curiously,

prospective young Timestop Etherites solving the classic “experience necessary” dilemma and presenting it to the Board with their applications have a better-than-even chance of being accepted, despite traditional biases.

• **Co-location Museum of Living Artifacts:** A gift from the Virtual Adepts to the Verbena of the Life Ward, this modern museum features fascinating displays of co-located ecosystems, exotic specimens and artistic medleys of ordinary plants and animals. A favorite exhibit, “Arcadian Moon Flora and Himalayan Fauna,” demonstrates the wild effects fae plant life can have on mundane animals. Other exhibits include examples of mundane marine ecosystems immersed in ephemeral lava; rows of collages featuring stacked elephants, lions, platypi, zebra and jellyfish; a live moray eel sculpture; co-located *asawe* trees which have grown upside-down and through each other; and black bears happily hibernating in the cavernous stomach of the Umbrial anomaly Eersk’lkantidor.

The three-story museum forms a half-circle around the Font of Renewal at the far end of the tiered Gardens of Life. The Qi-Nagi river winds between them both. Correspondence doors at either end of the half-circle transport visitors to the other side of the building.

• **Songgwang-sa Meditation Temple:** A beautiful flame-shaped temple carved entirely from the wood of the unique blue *bodhi* tree that grows only in the forests of Horizon’s Akashic subrealm. In the mid-1500s, the Akashics of the Mind Ward gifted the Spirit Ward with Taeo (“Great Awakening”) Temple, later renamed Songgwang-sa after the large Korean Buddhist monastery on Earth. It is said that meditating within Songgwang-sa’s chambers heals the soul and can raise Enlightenment (possibly inducing a Seeking on the spot). Every dawn, a group of Dreamspeakers enters the temple to chant morning prayers to a dozen gods. The peace, resonance and clarity of their devoted song is an experience not to be missed.

• **Kanisa wa Kweli (“Temple of Truth”):** A small temple modeled after a private chamber in the 17th-century’s Oba (King) of Benin’s court. Built by the Euthanatos and located in the Mind Ward, the Kanisa admits only one person at a time: Inside, the visitor sips bamboo wine from a perpetually filled bronze dish, chews three kola nuts and meditates. For an hour thereafter, he can discern truth from lie (as per the Entropy Effect, *Ring of Truth*). Many Akashics obtain permission to visit this site before meditating in order to pierce the veil of self-delusion that they believe plagues all humanity.

• **Piacere:** A lavish series of public baths modeled from those in ancient Rome and located, somewhat ironically, in the northern strip of the Prime Ward. The Ecstatics mischievously dedicated Piacere (pronounced “pee-ah-chair-ay”) to the Choristers there in the mid-1800s, after the baths inspired protests from the Prima’s followers, who felt them to be inappropriately hedonistic.

Nevertheless, their popularity has flourished over the last 150 years; half of the five navid cover charge being diverted to Chorus coffers made a marked difference in the Choristers’ attitude toward the baths.

Mages, censors and other inhabitants of Horizon mingle at Piacere in elaborately tiled pools, which are illuminated at night by Etherlamps and scented by curling smoke from thousands of spicy Javan vetiver incense sticks. Servants carry trays of pomegranates and special almond tea to the naked bathers, who flirt, feast and converse, then retire to beautifully tapestryed private dining rooms to recline on velvet couches, dine, talk and make love.

• **Miracle Pool:** In the back streets of the Entropy Ward, in the inner courtyards of the low-roofed Fatuus Dormitories, lies the Miracle Pool. In the late 1700s, two Hermetic mages fortified this pool of natural spring water with strong Forces magick, allowing anyone to walk across it as if it were solid.

• **Sruth na Mbláth:** Tended by Verbena custos from the Life Ward, Sruth na Mbláth, Gaelic for “stream of flowers,” is a five-mile wide diamond-shaped garden located in the Time Ward. All manner of flora is represented, including beautiful rainbow fields of creeping phlox, bee balm and sweet lavender in the spring, which meander alongside a tributary of the Qi-Nagi. Sruth na Mbláth is a favorite gathering place for the Cultists of the Time Ward, although mages from all Wards and subrealms visit it frequently.

• **Fenestra Inferorum:** “The Spectral Window.” Donated to the Virtual Adepts of the Correspondence Ward by the Euthanatos in 1987, the Fenestra Inferorum employs powerful Spirit magick, enabling users to peer into the mysterious and forlorn world of the Low Umbra. Although the Adepts find the artifact almost useless, certain mages claim to have spoken with the spirits of the dead whom the Fenestra occasionally attracts.

• **“Daggits” (Defensive Anti-Grav Teleportation Devices):** The Sons of Ether have contributed immensely to Concordia’s defenses by erecting their so-called “Daggits” on the outer wall of each Ward. Daggits are 50-foot long metal platforms surmounted by 10-foot copper coils at either end. Each platform has 20 landing pads, which look like human-sized Petri dishes filled with green electrostatic gel. When enemies threaten Concordia’s walls, Horizon can teleport troops onto these ramparts instantaneously. Conversely, Daggits contain anti-gravity devices configured to immediately eject anyone whose feet are not covered in the green gel on the landing pads, heaving them unceremoniously over the fortified walls.

Law

For the most part, Concordia has few serious laws. The obvious crimes — theft, assault, fraud, rape, murder, etc. — are illegal, of course, and each Ward has minor “residential codes” which depend on each given Tradition’s viewpoint.

Blasphemy is considered a petty crime in the Chorus Ward, littering is looked down on in the Verbena and Dreamspeaker sections, and wearing polyester is frowned upon in the Virtual Adept Ward. Violations are often punished with simple fines or expulsion from the Ward. The gaols are set aside for the more serious crimes.

Concordia's minimal police force deals with petty, non-magickal crimes and maintains three gaols above ground for custos and citizens. Dangerous criminals are entombed below ground in oubliettes (see below). Mages consider repeat petty offenders unreliable; all memories of Horizon are wiped from the offenders' brains before they're returned to Earth (or wherever they came from) forever. Horizon-born offenders have their passcards to Concordia destroyed so that they cannot enter the city.

When mages commit petty crimes, they're considered "unprofessional" and are often sent back to Earth. Residence in Horizon is a privilege, not a right. The Medeans serve as judge and jury in such cases, a holdover from less democratic times. Their decisions are based on evidence gathered by the Servitors Principal, their custos, guardians and police, while offenders are detained in a magickally reinforced holding cell (see sidebar). A offender is allowed to present her case to the Medeans before a verdict is reached.

Serious crimes such as murder or Infernalism are extremely rare, but occasionally occur. Usually, such cases go to the Medeans first for "legal triage" to determine whether or not the evidence warrants a Tribunal trial. If the charge involves multiple Traditions, it usually goes to Tribunal. The accused is held in an oubliette and guarded by two Adepts while preparing his case. If acceptable, a certámen may be held in lieu of a Tribunal trial; this usually occurs only when the challenger is fairly sure she will beat the accused. Defendants are allowed to choose between certámen and a Tribunal. Winners may declare any restitution except Gilgul (which is the sole privilege

of the Council of Nine), or they may allow the guilty to go free after undergoing an Ordeal — a set of challenges that reestablishes the mage's worth in the eyes of the Traditions.

The Prison

Naturally, the Council keeps an area aside for outlaw magi. Nearly two miles underneath the Council complex, a court and prison oubliettes await accused criminals. Captives are brought to a single Correspondence gate keyed to the prison complex, then locked in countermagicked oubliettes until their trial ends. Three sections of nine gaols exist — one for mages, one for consors and one for spirit entities. Normally, each prisoner gets his own cell. One large courtroom (equipped with a recording crystal like the one in the main Council Chambers), a sentencing hall (for branding, death or Gilgul sentences), and a series of storage rooms and debate chambers wind their way through Concordia's black stone foundations. This prison has never been filled to date, though a few incidents have brought the population to near capacity.

This "facility" has an illustrious history; less than a month after the Grand Convocation began, the jail housed its first occupants — a cabal of diabolist Ecstatics who considered rape a feast of the senses. When the March of the Nine collapsed, Heyel Teomim himself was locked in an oubliette while the Council debated his fate. One sad affair, the Keyall/al-Hashim feud, saw newly arrived Dreamspeaker envoys imprisoned for dueling with a group of Batini mages. Three of the Dreamspeakers died here under suspicious circumstances. When a group of Void Engineers and Iteration X scouts found their way through Lachesis Portal, they were locked here and interrogated. One, it is said, was buried alive in a hidden cell for killing a gaoler. The Medeans deny this rumor, but it persists to this day.

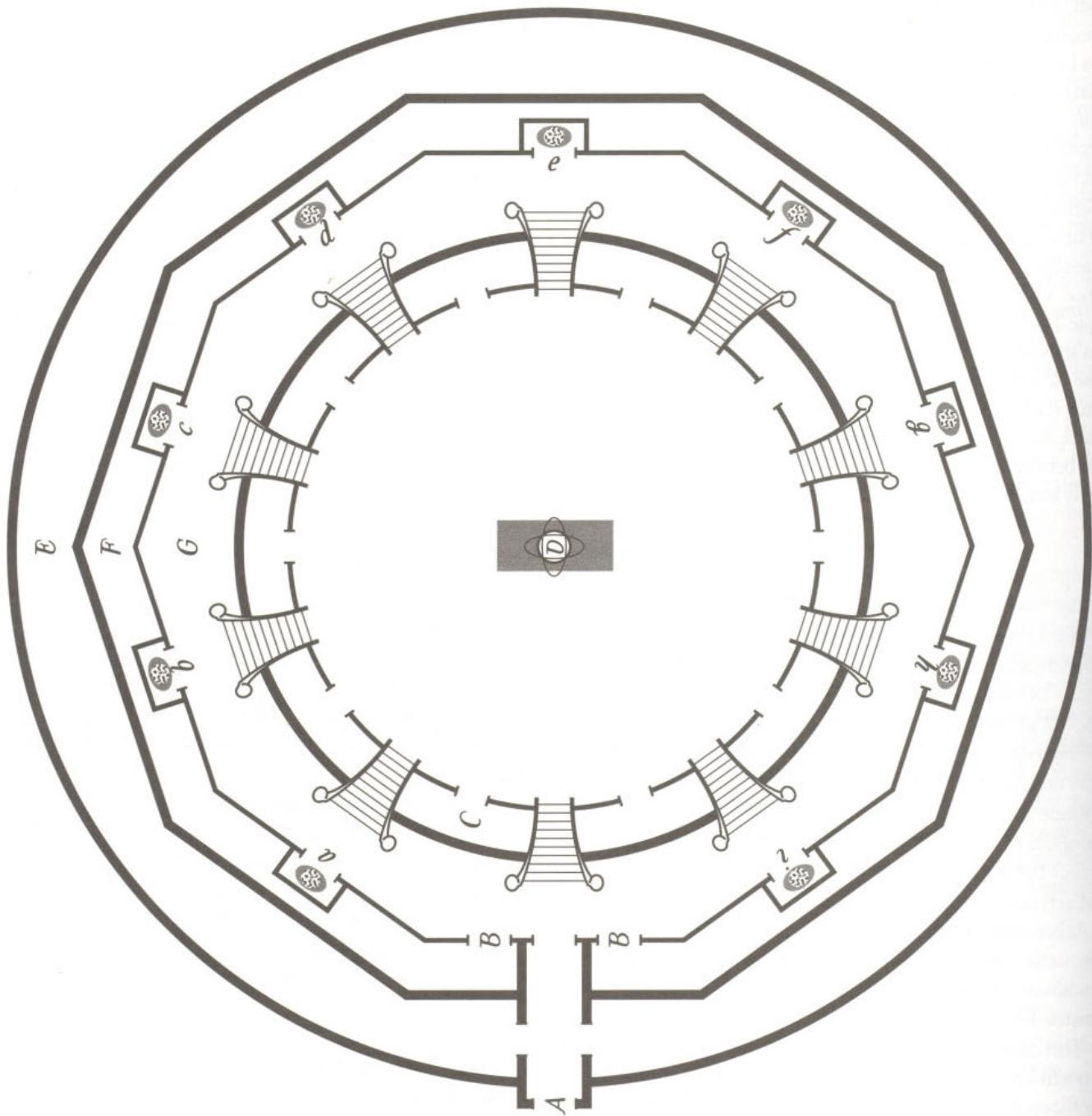
Horizon does not, as a rule, imprison criminals long term. Trials are held as soon as possible, and sentences are usually carried out within a week of the verdict's declaration.

Locked in the Oubliettes

In case one (or more) of your players find themselves imprisoned beneath Concordia, the following rules apply:

- Depending on how dangerous she appears to be, each prisoner will be accompanied by between two to five police officers, plus one or two Medean mages. Under most circumstances, the captive will be bound in countermagicked shackles; these soak four successes from any magick attempted by the person wearing them, and can withstand 10 Health Levels of damage before breaking. Anyone attempting an action while wearing these shackles adds +3 to her difficulties.
- The gaolers will be difficult but not impossible to distract; consider any attempt to do so to be difficulty 9. Any player trying to talk her way out of trouble should, of course, roleplay it out.
- Once they reach the cell, the gaolers shove the prisoner inside and activate the wards. These counterspells subtract five successes per turn from any Effect the prisoner attempts, and can only be deactivated from outside. Even then, doing so requires the proper key words, which must be learned from the Medean in charge of the investigation....
- Each oubliette has been carved from solid rock. Digging out is virtually impossible without magick or excavation tools. Accommodations are sparse but comfortable: one bed, a table, chair, toilet and an ever-filling water pitcher. Each of these items have been warded like the cell itself to prevent their misuse. Food appears magickally every six hours, and certain luxuries may be available the same way if the gaoler likes you. Such luxuries will not, of course, include weapons, Talismans, Tass or familiars.
- Three to five guards will be stationed outside the oubliettes for each prisoner inside. If the charges are minor, these officers will be pretty relaxed; if they're severe, the guards will be alert and expecting trouble. Under most circumstances, these officers will be courteous and remote. Really nasty crimes (or disrespect) might inspire them to take a little revenge when they think no one is looking.

ILLUSTRATION NOT TO SCALE	
COUNCIL CHAMBERS	
A	JANUA SAPIENTIAE portal of wisdom
B	doors to basement, courtyard and other locales scattered throughout meeting hall
C	private chambers
D	SAXUM OCULORUM on the TABLE CENACLE w/ 10 seats
E	HALL OF ARCHIVES
F	INNER COURTYARD no access to portals
G	MEETING HALL
a	HALL OF SOULS portal to Vajra
b	HALL OF BLISS portal to Shivakti
c	portal to Crashspace
d	HALL OF LaSALLE portal to Enochia bá Pymandre
e	HALL OF GARLANDS portal to Hanging Gardens of Horizon
f	HALL OF ETHER portal to Horizon Laboratory
g	HALL OF CLAN MOTHERS portal to Turtle Council House
h	HALL OF PINES portal to Sambo Chongch'al
i	HALL OF THE SUN portal to the Sanctified Penétralia of the Collegia Doctrina Soteriologica



The Council Complex

Occupying the exact center of Concordia's Wards, the high-domed Council Chambers sit upon the crown of the ancient hill Siúinéir, dwarfing the Pantheon in stature and the Vatican in sumptuousness. Tiered gracefully into Siúinéir below it, the sculptured wooden Archives building rings the entire hillside and holds over a billion volumes. Below the Archives and also below part of the tiered landscaping lie wood-terraced dormitories, breezy study halls, hillside gardens with burbling waterfalls, open-air classrooms and balconied temples that provide worshippers with gorgeous vistas of Horizon's rolling hills. Many paths wind their way around the hill to the Chambers at the top. The largest of these, the Via Antiqua, is beautiful at night when the warm glow of its lanterns illuminates its sigilled mahogany handrails and glints off the rills dancing down the hillside to join the Qi-Nagi.

A harmonious blend of styles from many different places and times, the compound's architecture celebrates its population's simultaneous diversity and unity. Its atmosphere resonates with a sense of both comforting familiarity and mystickal intensity: The air almost tastes of Tass, and you can smell the heady spice of Quintessence in the breeze. This complex is far more than a simple dwelling place; each component of Horizon's main compound symbolizes the hope that unity holds for the Traditions.

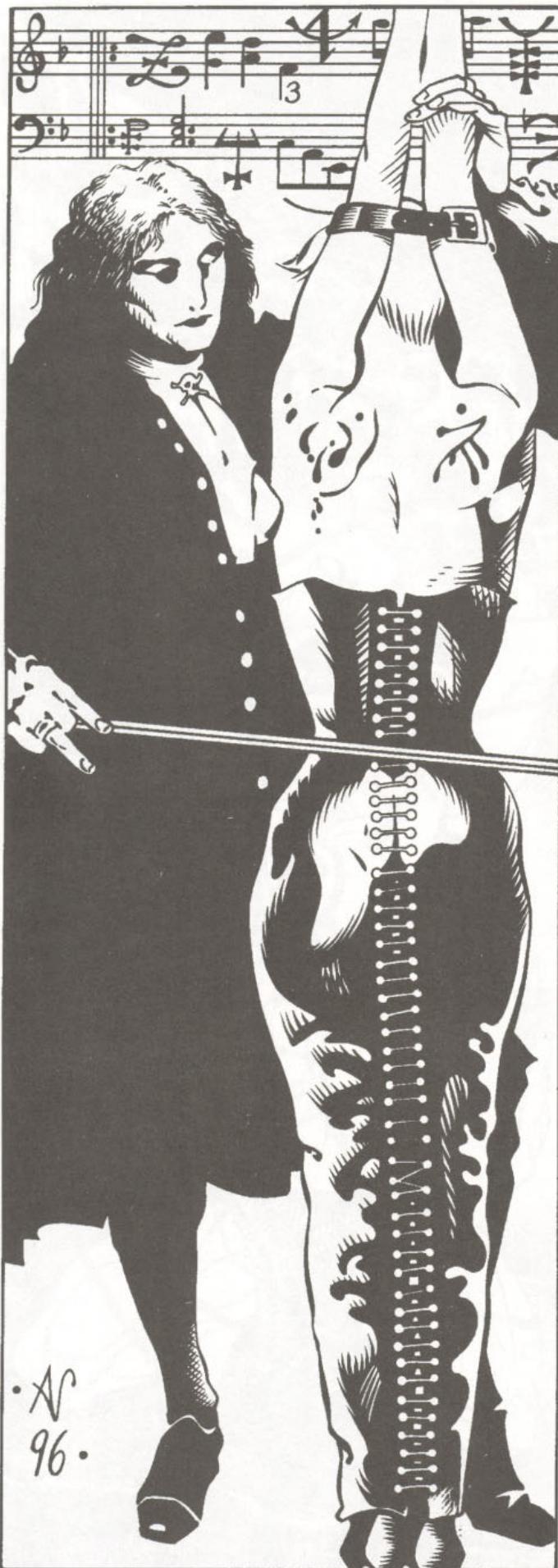
The Council Chamber

The Council Chamber sits at the center of an immense domed building. Mosaic floors, fluted columns, marble sculptures, elegant carvings and comfortable tokonomas adorned with ancient bonsai specimens grace the outskirts of the central hall. Beneath the exquisitely coffered dome that rises almost 600 feet above the floor sits the huge Table Cenacle, made of rare blue *bodhi* wood from the forests of Sambo Chongch'al, the Akashic subrealm. Atop the Table floats Saxum Oculorum, a massive crystal sphere that records (and can repeat) every word spoken under the dome. Few outside the Council of Nine know this artifact's true powers.

Soft light filters down from the high circular windows in the dome. Called Fenestrae, these 10 openings focus the mammoth quantities of Nodal Quintessence funneled in from Earth via the Crystal Bastions, filling the entire 750 foot chamber with their intensity. The 10th Fenestra faces due west, aligning with Keyhole Pass to illuminate the Saxum Oculorum on sunset of the first day of winter. High above all the Fenestrae, an oculus allows the noon-day sun to penetrate the Chambers with its warmth and brilliance.

The Traditions' 10 great Seats of Power ring the Table Cenacle. These Seats, each representing a Sphere of magick, are carved directly from huge precious gemstones that symbolize their Spheres. Graven deeply within a half-moon extension to the high-backed Seats, each Sphere's symbol glows. Using simple Prime magick, mages can trace Quintessence lines





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leading from each Fenestra, through the Saxum Oculorum and out to an appropriate Seat. The Quintessence originating at the Dreamspeaker Node Arches National Park, for instance, would enter Horizon through the Spirit Gate in the Crystal Bastions, then funnel through the Spirit Fenestra in the Council Dome, through the Saxum Oculorum and link to the Seat of Spirit around the Table Cenacle. These links feed the appropriate quantities of Quintessence to the land, the city and the subrealms in turn.

The 10th Seat, carved of onyx and reserved for outside envoys, showed no symbol until recently. Since the strange sigil's appearance, all the Traditions have tried unsuccessfully to claim the Seat for themselves. In recent months, the Council Seats have begun to reorder themselves at 20-day intervals. The Council cannot detect a pattern in these spontaneous arrangements. Council member Najjda Bantu, however, notes that the 10th Fenestra now links Quintessence through the Saxum Oculorum to the 10th Seat. She has assigned her Adepts to investigate the mysterious source of this new Quintessence.

Layout

Many different paths lead to the steps of the Council Chambers at the top of the hill. In order to enter, the traveler must proceed through the Janua Sapientiae ("Portal of Wisdom"), a huge pair of oak doors inlaid with the golden symbols of all the Traditions. Inside, a mahogany-paneled hall leads through the Archives building; doors on either side open into the Archives themselves. This "Hall of Archives," as it is known, leads to the Meeting Hall, a decagonal hall lying between the Archives and the Council Chambers. The Meeting Hall is rather dark, but with its low ceiling, parquet floors, warm glowing Etherlamps, and many private niches and benches on which to talk, visitors often feel more *comfortable here than* in the Council Chambers themselves.

The Meeting Hall is important in that it leads both to the Council Chambers and to the subrealms. 10 great arches span a set of stairs ascending into the raised Council Chambers—one for each Sphere and one leading to the Hall of Archives. In the Meeting Hall, on the opposite side of each arch (except the Arch of Archives), is a door leading to each Tradition's subrealm portal. The hallway between this door and the portal has a name (see below) and is decorated according to the tastes of the Master of that subrealm.

Other doors in the Meeting Hall open onto conference rooms, Ambassadors' Quarters, a decagonal courtyard between the Hall and the Archives building, worn steps leading down to the Archives' basements, storage rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, an underground font, a maze of catacombs housing the tombs of deceased familiars, and the mysterious Depthless Labyrinths, as well as back doors to the other buildings that form tiers along the outside of the hill. These back doors are kept locked and warded to prevent unauthorized visitors from intruding upon the Council Chambers. (Assume that any attempt to circumvent these wards and locks requires at least 10 successes with some form of

magick; botches set off some disastrous Effect and alert the Council guards given in Chapter Five.)

The Subrealms

Fed by Quintessence focused through the Council Chamber's Fenestrae, Horizon's subrealms are generally small, but comfortable. Elected Tradition leaders (usually those who occupy the Council Seats) act as subrealm Masters, responsible for all activities occurring within their domain. Visitors are required to perform an entrance protocol before crossing the threshold; these services demonstrate respect for the Tradition and, more often than not, discourage "the wrong sort of people" from coming in at all.

Sambo Chongch'al

The "Three Jewel Monasteries," Sambo Chongch'al is the name of the Akashic subrealm of Horizon. The Hall of Pines, a simple hallway whose walls and ceiling are lined with rough-hewn pine boards, leads to a similarly simple but graceful portal constructed from bamboo. Inside, a comfortable, cushioned antechamber houses Akashic masters who gather there to talk, play Go or rest. Traditionally, two Adepts (called the *p'opho*) guard the door to the rest of the subrealm, a holdover from the Tradition's earlier days of mistrust, but also as a last ditch effort against the threat of Umbral invaders. If their visitors have not done so already, the *P'opho* require them to remove their shoes and bow before entering the subrealm.

The subrealm itself is a small, hilled pine forest in which three small monasteries sit. At the peak of one of the hills lies a grove of sacred *bodhi* trees protected by *oeho* ("external protectors"), tiny winged dragon spirits that wield powerful Mind Effects. Every morning, the chief vergers from the three monasteries ascend the hill to the *bodhi* grove, where they recite the Homage to the Three Jewels: "May the fragrance of our morality, our concentration, our wisdom, our liberation and our knowledge and vision of liberation — may all this form a bright, shining pavilion that fills all the dharma-realm, thereby doing homage to the countless buddhas, their teachings, and their congregations, in all the 10 directions."

The three monasteries are named T'ongdo-sa, Haein-sa and Songgwang-sa (inspiring the Korean monasteries of the same name), and each is considered representative of one of the three jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the *dharma* (teachings) and the *samgha* (congregation). Between the three is a flat area reserved for martial exercises and large gatherings.

The Sanctified Penetralia of the Collegia Doctrina Soteriologica

The Hall of the Sun, a passageway elaborately inlaid with gold and studded with pearls, leads to the Celestial Chorus' subrealm portal. The antechamber to the subrealm is a small, high-vaulted chapel with pews which can each seat approximately 10 people. Two acolytes, arrayed in purple and gold

waistcoats, hosiery, and feathered velvet caps, protected by ornately etched plastrons, and grasping ceremonial pikes, guard the door to the subrealm. Before being allowed to enter, visitors must recite a brief, respectful prayer to whatever divine aspect they revere.

The double leaves, arched *objets d'art* of bronzed wood and jewels, open onto a lavish tabernacle whose pews recede into the distance and whose vaulted ceilings are adorned with sacred paintings that shame Michelangelo at his best. Sculpted colonnades on either side of the building support the tabernacle's graceful pairs of cross-ribbed vaults and double arches. Quiet alcoves display religious masterpieces of sculpture and ancient relics. Gothic windows, austere and graceful, filter soft light into the apse, while a stained-glass rose window colors the light in the nave.

At the far end of the tabernacle, the altar shines with magickal golden radiance. Statues of thousands of religious figures adorn the area behind the altar, lit with the natural light emanating from the windows and the soft flicker of thousands of votive candles. To either side of the altar, a door opens onto the next place of worship, a Jewish temple, and the next, a Buddhist stupa, and so on, in an endless array of houses of worship and holy spots. The result is awe-inspiring, a fit tribute to the sacred.

Because the Collegia Doctrina Soteriologica does not occupy space *per se*, each place of worship has a door leading to shared dormitories, the Prima's inner sanctum (guarded by two Adepts), a library, a treasury and other important rooms.

Shivakti

A name combination of the lover-god Shiva and his consort Shakti, this Cult of Ecstasy subrealm celebrates the union of lovers, as well as all ecstatic paths to bliss. Daily, acolytes bedeck the hall leading to Shivakti — named the Hall of Bliss — in fresh lotus flowers, spice wreaths, and garlands of pomegranates, peaches and other fruit. Incense burns continually, and two small coffers of cannabis rest at the foot of the door to the realm. Visitors may take anything they wish from the Hall.

Inside, a lounge decorated in lavish Persian fabric and furniture awaits visitors. The central rug is thick and soft, the fringed cushions on the floor make ideal places to sit or sleep, and the silk tent canopy overhead lends the chamber an intimate air. To one side, there is a small, self-serve kitchen and bar, always magickally full. No one guards the door to the realm, but visitors are expected to fully disrobe before entering. Shivakti's Ecstatics are especially pleased if visitors bring partners.

The Realm itself is essentially one large pleasure house. At its center lies a burbling fountain of cool Tass-laden water surrounded by a ring of fragrant apple trees. Flowering clematis vines adorn the walls, while gardens of pink and moonbeam coreopsis, dwarf hollyhocks, lace rose, and double peonies bloom to either side of the entry portal. Doors on every wall lead to a sauna, hundreds of private and shared "loverooms" (as they are called), smoking rooms and chambers dedicated to every



other sensual delight. Marianna, the Master of Shivakti, has made every possible effort to create a realm pleasing to her Ecstatics and to visitors.

Turtle Council House

The Hall of Clan Mothers, a simple hallway decorated with feathers and the Medicine Shields of the 13 Clan Mothers, opens into Turtle Council House, a large earth lodge with three doors: one leading to the Native American subrealm of the same name, one leading to Olodumare, the African Dreamspeaker subrealm and one leading to Boolarung, the Australian Dreamspeaker subrealm.

Turtle Council House, taken as a whole, was constructed in the late 1400s by male Dreamspeakers of the Djiiionondowanenake and of the African Lwo who wished to honor their wives, mothers and grandmothers after the assassination of the African Dreamspeaker Naioba.

Three totem familiars—a wolf, a python and a Gecko lizard—guard the doors to the subrealms. Before entering Turtle Council House, visitors must offer a gift and smoke a wisdom pipe with Wolf. If Wolf determines that the gift honors the Clan Mothers, he allows the visitor into Turtle Council House. Visitors wishing to enter Olodumare must bow to Python, who is regarded as the reincarnation of all Dreamspeakers' ancestors, then take a chewing stick (a traditional charm to prevent quarrels) from the woven basket beside the door and keep it with them throughout their time in Olodumare. Similarly, Danga, a familiar in the form of a Gecko lizard, guards the door to Boolarung. Visitors must offer a dream to Danga by allowing him to touch their ears with his tongue. Danga, while appearing humble beside Python and Wolf, knows powerful Mind magick that can instantly liquefy an intruder's gray matter.

The Native American subrealm Turtle Council House consists of a large oval house built both above and below ground, surrounded by the shore of an infinite lake. Visitors enter from the Turtle Council House earth lodge directly into the Council House chambers above ground, which are domed and covered with mud, leaves and stones that form the "shell" of Grandmother Turtle. The sacred chambers below ground represent Mother Earth's womb. Only female Dreamspeakers are permitted here; each month, Masters gather to hear Mother Earth speak the wisdom of heart, womb and mind.

Olodumare, the African Dreamspeaker subrealm, consists of 60 circular huts of carefully woven rushes, thatch and bamboo set in a clearing amidst endless jungle. A larger hut containing the Golden Stool of Osei Tutu, which allows the sitter to speak with the spirits of the ancestral dead, occupies the center of the clearing. Visitors are not allowed in this sacred site, but are welcomed in all the other huts. (Trespassers into the main hut face madness and death, as they are forced to sit on the Golden Stool, which opens their minds to alien spirits. Out of pity, those who go insane are dispatched quickly.) The other huts in the clearing—homes, storage and meeting areas—often contain polished wooden sculptures and dolls containing spirits, masks of supernatural entities, polyrhythmic talking drums, bundles of

sticks (to guard the home) and feathers (to guard its occupants), palm-frond archways (to dissipate disease) and raffia brooms (to keep away ill-intentioned visitors). Both folk tales and spontaneous and choreographed dance are staples of life here.

Infinite living desert comprises Boolarung. Australian Dreamspeakers walk from locale to locale, often finding or creating comfortable shelter at the base of a tree or in a wind-worn red cave. Australian wildlife—including the now-extinct moa—wander throughout the subrealm and frequently accompany lone Dreamspeakers on walkabouts. Boolarung's two main features, Kunnaloo Rock and Kungalo Rock, rise abruptly from the desert floor, each one 1000 feet tall. These rocks are said to contain the essence of spirit communication. If they were to be destroyed, the Dreamspeakers believe, then communication throughout the realms would disintegrate, people would misunderstand each other, and fighting would break out everywhere.

Vajra

Meaning "adamantine" or "diamond," the Euthanatos subrealm Vajra inherits its name from eastern symbolism signifying "that which is beyond arising and ceasing" and is thus "indestructible." To the Euthanatos, Vajra has connotations of the soul, the mind and male power.

The Hall of Souls, an unadorned hallway of polished gray marble, leads to a tomblike antechamber carved of similar stone and left unfurnished. Opposite the Hall of Souls, Vajra's forbidding portal, a Spartan circle of white marble with blackness beyond, is intended to keep out sightseers and the merely curious. To cross the threshold, visitors must squeeze nine drops of their own blood into a diamond basin kept at the side of the portal. Although the portal shows no visible signs of opening, visitors soon hear the sound of rushing wind—perhaps the passing of the subrealm's guardian—indicating that they are free to enter. If they look, they will find that the basin is empty.

Inside Vajra, visitors are welcomed by the sight of a Shinto rock garden with sand raked in rows of delicate beauty. Simple huts decorated with flower arrangements emphasize the transitory nature of the "flesh house" to Euthanatos and visitors alike. Small things—like candles kept snuffed out and beautiful mosaics of preserved autumn leaves—remind visitors that they are in the subrealm of the Euthanatos; otherwise, Vajra seems like a perfectly comfortable and normal place to live, work and sleep. Its Master, *Rimpoché Indrani Taktsang*, firmly believes in striking a mature balance between life and death in both the philosophy and the aesthetics of Vajra.

Enochia ba Pymandre

Named after a system of magick (Enoch) and the essence of omnipotence (Pymander), the Hermetic subrealm consists of hall upon windowless hall dedicated to study and the appreciation of the arcane. Dusty, tome-laden rooms punctuate the hall motif.

Entering Enochia through the Hall of LaSalle, visitors see a number of the famed Primus Baldric LaSalle's original manuscripts encased in glass, as well as some minor Talismans from

his private collections. The door to the antechamber is solid oak, studded with black iron pins containing wards against the fae. Croesius, a small sphinx and Master Sao Cristavao's familiar, guards this door. To enter, visitors must either answer a symbolic riddle (e.g., "Which symbol represents Life and the action principle?" Answer: "The square, which results from crossing lines — i.e., the crossing of opposites which creates life"), or offer a riddle to which Croesius does not yet know the answer. The latter is usually harder. Furthermore, etiquette encourages visitors to remain with the sphinx afterwards to discuss the problem presented at the door. Most non-Hermetics find some excuse to wheedle their way out of such conversations, which tend to become heated and extremely arcane.

The antechamber contains more of Baldric's private collection on display, while the portal to the subrealm itself consists of twin oak doors inlaid with gold warding glyphs. Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao, current Council Member and Master of Enochia, has personally engraved many of the warding glyphs throughout the subrealm. A number of Hermetic mages that live there are beginning to think that he suffers from some sort of magickal paranoia... or perhaps that he has good reason to create these glyphs.

The subrealm contains the famed Antiquarium Hermeticorum (Hermetic Museum), the Library of Horizon, the Hall of the Philosophers (busts of all the philosophers known to humanity which can magickally "download" their works into one's brain), the Arch of Tytalus, the Tomb of the Scytians, the Triclinium of Mithras (a banquet room), the Mausoleum of LaSalle, as well as a number of famous columns, obelisks and triptychs.

Horizon Laboratory

Visitors walking down the Hall of Ether get the feeling that they are part of the Sons' latest obscure scientific experiment: Large copper coils stand on either side of the hallway, connected by a tangle of dangling wires. Troughs of magnetized substrates bubble along heated tubes into the wall at the far end of the Hall. Unlike other subrealms, the Etherites have constructed their place so that its anteroom lies behind the portal to Horizon Labs. Thus, at the terminus of the Hall of Ether stands a telepathically locked steel vault with the twin electrodes of Jacob's Ladder on either side.

To enter, visitors must speak into a loudly buzzing telecom. Inside the lab, an Etherite attendant (usually an Adept) asks the visitor for a new scientific theory. If the visitor can produce one and defend it adequately (while remembering to press the telecom button), she is deemed a worthwhile visitor and allowed to enter.

Horizon Laboratory looks like a cross between Sherlock Holmes' study and Dr. Frankenstein's lab. Just inside sits the Victorian anteroom described in **Chapter One**. Through a door at the other end of the chamber lies a large laboratory connected to a number of smaller ones. A thick lightning rod linked to a generator pierces Skydome, the central lab. Advanced Scientists perform several experiments at once, leaving their confused acolytes to watch over geometric arrays of glass tubes and beakers filled with colorful liquids

bubbling over Bunsen burners. Scientists can find most of the latest technologies in Horizon Labs, as well as a small electronic library of the decade's scientific breakthroughs. A set of Correspondence doors in the hall leads to the Timestop Labs in the Matter Ward.

Hanging Gardens of Horizon

The Verbena's Hall of Garlands opens directly onto the lush Hanging Gardens of Horizon. A magnificent red oak tree 50 yards in diameter stands at the center of the Gardens. Beneath its roots lie the Caves of Druids, where the Verbena live. Surrounding the Tree, visitors' squat dormitories, crudely chiseled from stone, are draped with wisteria vines and ornamental flowers.

The Gardens themselves are lovely, filled in places with blossom-laden niches dedicated to gods or goddesses, flowers designed to attract butterflies or magickal beasts and magickal specimens that can alter moods and heal wounds. Magnificent weeping cherries, Japanese red maples and Kousa dogwoods line the paths leading to the Willow Pond and the Grove of Unicorns, while thick borders of red sedum, festuca, lavender and carpet phlox line those to the Misty Brakes and the Umbral Tidepool.

The Verbena only allow a certain amount of foot traffic through the Gardens each day. As in Shivakti, visitors must fully disrobe before entering, both for symbolic reasons (the shedding of appearances and inhibitions) and for practical ones (it helps reduce the number of visitors). After the daily visitor quota has been reached, the Verbena post a sentry in the Hall of Garlands who permits only those on business through the gate.

Crashspace

The hallway leading to the Virtual Adept subrealm Crashspace has no name and is covered in a thin layer of fine dust. The door is usually locked, despite Council protests. Unknown to them, Crashspace served as Council Member Roger Thackery's apartment until he took up residence on the Digital Web; now he visits Horizon only through hologram. Since the beginning of Thackery's physical leave of absence, the Umbrood who had been bugging the apartment grew bored and moved on, though it continues to siphon off the subrealm's Quintessence allotment.

Visitors wanting to enter Crashspace (for whatever reason) must pick the locked door. The only problem is that the door is locked with a computerized triple-encryption scheme that resets itself every time the door closes (and hence, once visitors enter the room, they have to pick their way out again). The encryption scheme, while candy to a Virtual Adept, is difficult by other mortals' standards, and it typically requires a sophisticated algorithm to decode. Mages who simply blast through the door with Forces (or other) magick typically find that their bank accounts have been encrypted, or that they have just broken into a co-located room where two (or more) lovers are going at it.

Visitors who successfully navigate their way into Crashspace encounter a room full of miniVAX towers with flashing multicolored lights, tangled power cords, ZIP drives, teleconferencing equipment, Jolt cola, Wired magazines, recordable CDs and disks labeled "Telemetry to NSA" and "CIA Backup." A wall of 60-inch



monitors display formulas scrolling by at lightning speed. This is, however, a dummy room, intended for dummies. The computers crash, and the teleconferencing equipment scrambles words into statements opposite the speaker's intention. Even the cola is flat. When inserted into non-Crashspace machines, the disks infect the system, and repeatedly display things like "Eat me!" and "Doofus!" on the screen, while contacting the NSA or CIA to give them the address of the user who is trying to break into their systems.

To all appearances, Crashspace ends at the dummy room. However, by pushing the right colored buttons on the computers in the correct order, visitors can "open" a 60-inch screen that leads to Thackery's apartment. The dust-covered bedroom consists of a bed, a Sting poster, a desk and a single laptop with a brainjack (and no keyboard) far more powerful than all the equipment in the dummy room could ever hope to be. Beyond the bedroom are a small kitchen and bath which both desperately need cleaning (especially the stove). Large, unidentifiable clumps of organic matter reside in the corners and under the rugs, a fuzzy patch of mold clusters on the telephone receiver and dust covers everything in sight.

Hidden back doors leading to Crystal Palace and the Spy's Demise are co-located "in" the bed and "in" the Sting poster. Both are heavily iced with wards — one screw-up, no second chance: As they permanently lose coherence, intruders will find their brains being converted to electrons and distributed as e-mail to Adepts across the world. Breaking in requires plugging the brainjack into one's skull (assuming the intruder even has one of these rare devices installed in his own skull) — not a good idea to begin with, since it contains an extremely sophisticated (Wits + Hacking, difficulty 10) encryption device synced to Thackery's personal brainjack. Failure to automatically decrypt the formulae that serve as its passwords results in an electrical surge that blows off the intruder's head (a Forces 3/Prime 2 Effect with an "Arete" of 7 dice). Getting past the brainjack difficulty, intruders have to know that choosing certain screensavers — two among many (all of which themselves have passwords) — opens an application that allows the user to see the back doors. Similar encryptions apply to getting through these doors (extended rolls of Wits + Hacking, difficulty 10); failure results in an electrical surge, as above, and the electronic summoning of the Paradox spirit Igtukra the Unbridled.

A Magickal United Nations

RE: Invitation. We accept.

—Letter from Roger Thackery to the Council of Traditions (dated July 11th, 1961).

Horizon, the official symbol of the Traditions' unity, teems with mages intent on improving themselves and the worlds around them. Sometimes, however, their ideas about *how* to implement these improvements do not mesh; thus, politics are born. The following section offers some ideas for the Storyteller about the big names in Horizon, their issues, factions, disputes and dynamics. Further information on individual mages can be found in Chapter Five.

The Archmages

Tradition members charged with subrealm oversight appoint a representative to the Council of Nine (according to individual Tradition custom) who then takes up the mantle of Subrealm Master. Although many of the following archmages absent themselves from the Realm on a too-regular basis, the current roster of the Council of Nine are:

- Akashic Hyemyong S'unim;
- Chorister Najjda Bantu;
- Ecstatic Marianna;
- Dreamspeaker Tom "Laughing Eagle" Smithson;
- Euthanatos Indrani Taksang;
- Hermetic Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao;
- Etherite Julian Spence;

- Verbena Charlotte Quay; and...
- Virtual Adept Roger Thackery.

The Cabals

Cabals within Horizon have come and gone over the past 500 years. Many held to tradition and were eventually disbanded when the Chantry's new blood proved to be uninterested in their goals. Others appealed to Masters fresh from Earth and ready for action, sustaining membership over the long centuries.

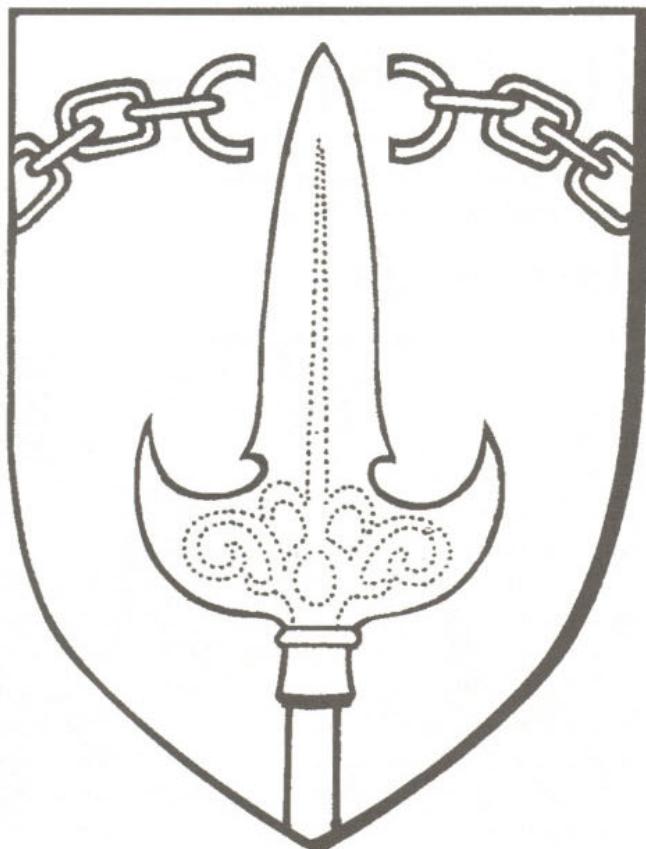
Though not as scheming or as numerous as those of her sister Chantry at Doissetep, most of Horizon's eight cabals nevertheless take leadership just as seriously. Traditionally, their competitive history has prevented the Chantry's long Winter from easing into Spring. At the turn of this century, however, the dynamics among the cabals began to improve, resulting in Spring and now, seemingly, the first signs of Summer. Many Horizon mages credit this continuing metamorphosis in part to the Council's enlightened Ambassador Program, in which mages study under a number of different Traditions rather than under just one.

Over 100 resident mages take care of their own affairs and have little to do with these eight cabals. Most of them have set aside their own little place in Horizon, while others gather into independent cabals. Interestingly, many of the Masters who belong to Concordia's main cabals also belong to other cabals on Earth or in other Realms.

Order of Sanguine Souls

A militaristic cabal dedicated to the destruction of the Technocracy, particularly the Inquisitorial practices of the New World Order. In the mid-1400s, a group of mages who later became the Sanguine Souls unsuccessfully petitioned the Council of Nine to start a head-to-head war with the nascent Order of Reason. The Council considered this course, but ultimately felt that the First Cabal should represent a strength-gathering, rather than a militaristic, mission. Today, the Order amasses information on the Technocracy with the intent of spearheading a massive strike force against it. Perhaps as Horizon enters Summer, it will have the requisite power and wisdom to undertake such a daring mission.

Current Members: Anania Divraniya (Master, Order of Hermes), X (Master, Virtual Adepts), Hyeguk S'unim (Master, Akashic Brotherhood), Dyson Strongan (Master, Euthanatos), Charlotte Quay (Master, Verbena).



The Medeans

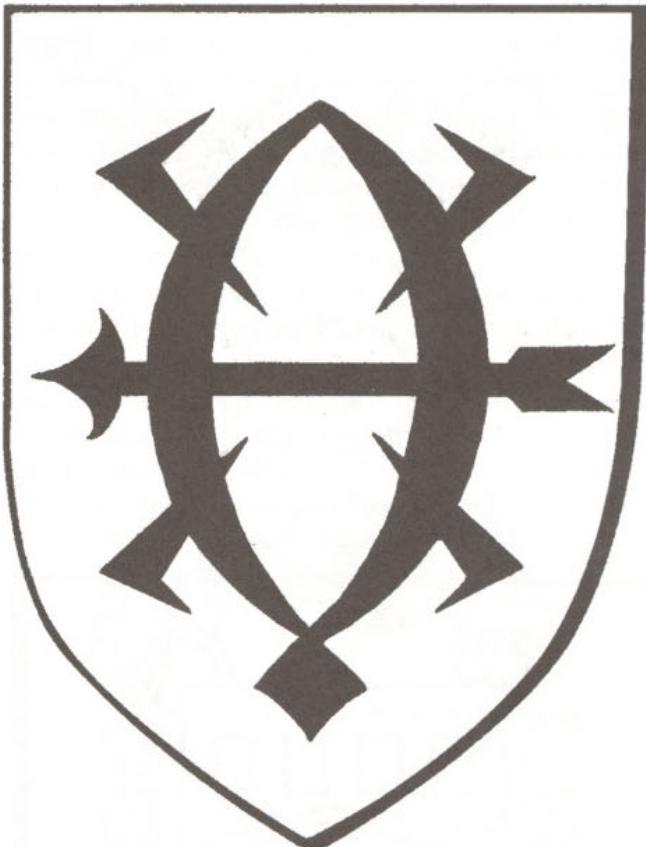
Descended from the Horizon Guard, the Medeans monitor threats to the Realm, both internal and external. They occupy important positions within Horizon, take responsibility for the surveillance of the Realm's Nodes and for its Gates (they instituted the policy that only Masters are allowed entry directions and passwords to Horizon) and serve as the Chantry's watchdogs against spies. The nine Servitors Principle — Adepts responsible for Horizon's security — answer directly to this cabal, as do many members of the Realm's police forces. Naturally, this makes the cabal an exceedingly powerful force in Horizon politics. To avoid corruption, the Medeans frequently rotate membership with other cabals, or recruit new members. If a security threat actually exists, the Medeans call a Tribunal for the Servitors. The Medeans tend to be very rational and thorough, though sometimes snobbish and intolerant of those with less suspicious natures.

Current Members: Roger Thackery (Master, Virtual Adepts), Leif Dinesen (Master, Order of Hermes), Kyla Harrod (Master, Sons of Ether), Julius Breslouf (Master, Celestial Chorus), Yoshiaki Yamamoto (Adept, Akashic Brotherhood).

The Cleisthenic Clinic

Named after the 6th-century statesman who revolutionized Athenian democratic government, the Cleisthenic Clinic is an older cabal (formerly known as the Brotherhood of Cleisthenics) that concerns itself with keeping the Realm's politics running smoothly. In practice, the Clinic involves itself in political maneuvering, infighting and intrigue. If any one cabal could be fingered for retarding Horizon's evolution from Winter to Spring, it would be the Clinic. Yet, with the infusion of new blood over the past seven years, the cabal has opened up somewhat and recognized the importance of cooperation. Thus, while the Clinic thoroughly opposes the addition of the Hollow Ones to the Council of Nine (stating that their presence would throw off the balance of power and disrupt the Council's relationships) it does, with a few exceptions, support the Ambassador Program.

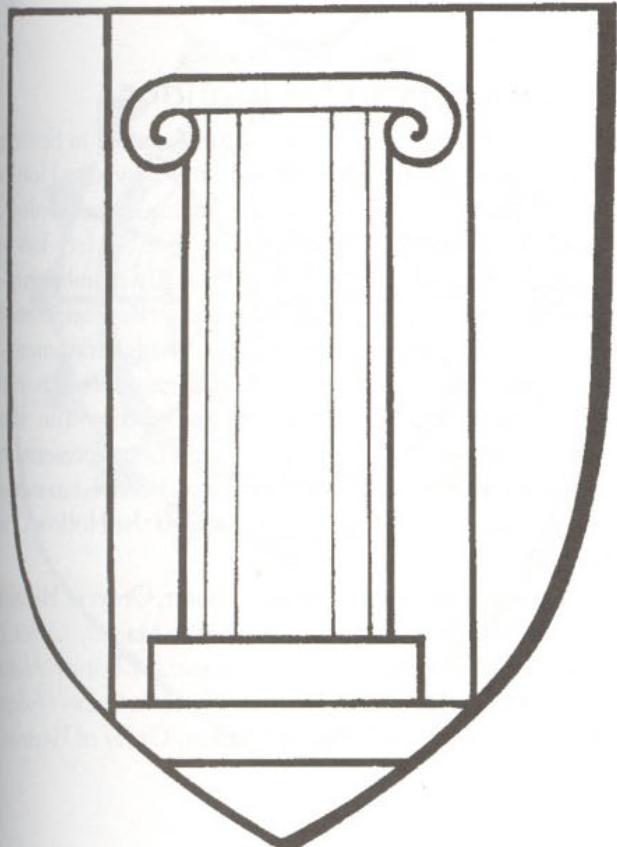
Current Members: Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao (Master, Order of Hermes), Indrani Taktsang (Master, Euthanatos), Swimming Trout (Master, Akashic Brotherhood), Aram Marangoudakis (Master, Order of Hermes), Hasmig Salibian (Adept, Euthanatos).



Fresh Wind Covenant

The Cleisthenics' opposites, the members of this cabal emphasize the importance of fresh ideas and new blood on the Council and in Horizon, rather than the constant repositioning of old blood on the Traditions' seats of power. Some members secretly assist Porthos in his mission to welcome the Hollow Ones, while openly supporting the Ambassador Program.

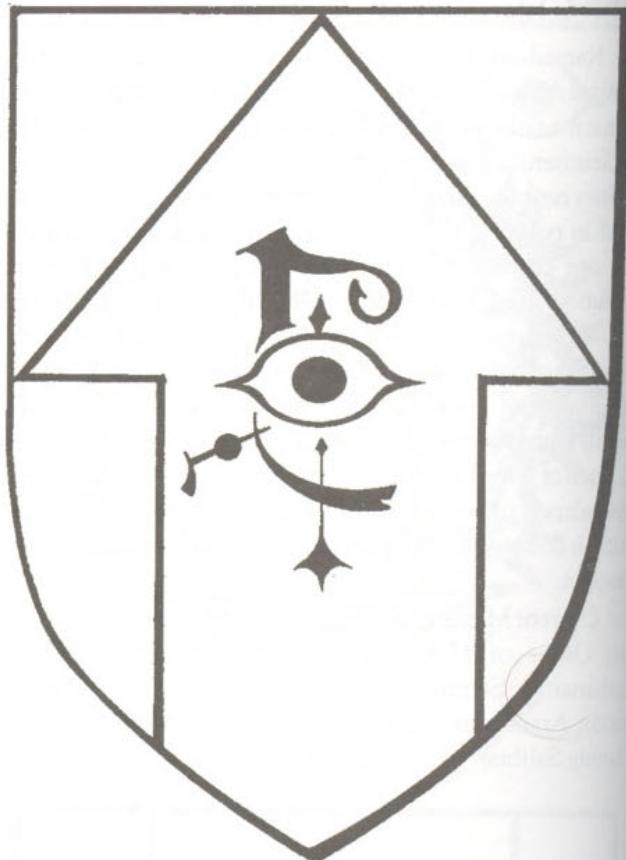
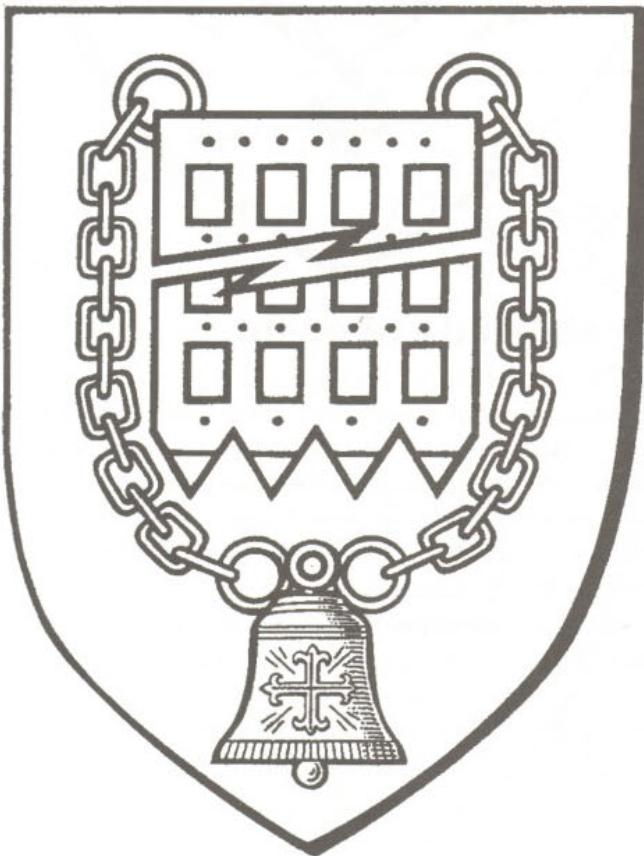
Current Members: Julian Spence (Master, Sons of Ether), Hyemyong S'unim, (Master, Akashic Brotherhood), Priabpan Punyabukkana (Adept, Cultist of Ecstasy), Diana Beals (Adept, Verbena), Fatima Alzarahni (Master, Celestial Chorus), Beth "Rising Moon" Thomas (Adept, Dreamspeakers).



The Sodality of Zetetics

An extreme group founded in the late 1400s, the Sodality questions the nature of reality and maintains the importance of an unperturbable mind. Its goals of understanding and achieving Ascension flavor its interactions with everyone. Most of its members believe that Ascension necessitates Horizon's unity, and thus they have helped usher Horizon into Springtime. Current projects include educational reform which would replace the scientific paradigm with a more thought-provoking philosophical paradigm.

Current Members: Haskell Cohen (Master, Celestial Chorus), Auris Galina Gritsenko (Master, Order of Hermes), Naveed Yousuf (Master, Akashic Brotherhood), Margaret Storch (Adept, Euthanatos), Devane Carbeau (Adept, Sons of Ether).



The Society of Pymander

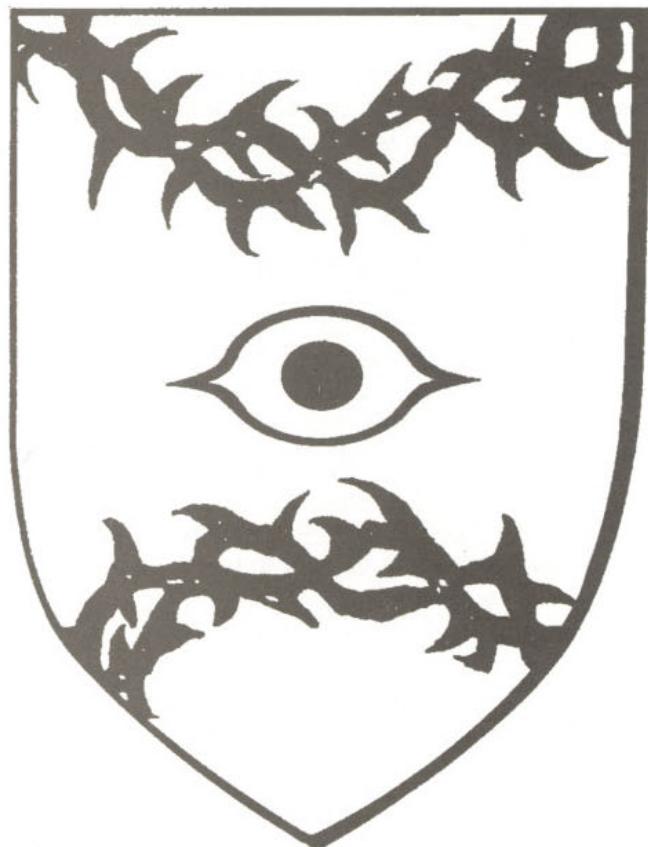
A fraternal, esoteric organization founded in Spain in the 1100s, the Society of Pymander later moved to Horizon where it could study the arcane without the Order of Reason's interference. Traditionally, the Society has attracted older Hermetics, but theoretically membership is open to everyone. While its stated goal is the attainment of Ascension, the cabal's unspoken goal is the attainment of vast power — the omnipotence that Pymander symbolizes. The Pymandic Masters often invite Porthos into their gatherings, as he, of all Tradition mages, best represents the "Pymandic Essence." Using his influence, Porthos has swayed Society members to support his bid to add the Hollow Ones to the Traditions' rosters.

Current Members: Porthos (Master, Order of Hermes, Honorary Member), Karl Magnussen (Master, Order of Hermes), Carina Olmez (Master, Celestial Chorus), Austin Renton (Master, Dreamspeakers), Victoria Sacks (Adept, Order of Hermes), Stig Olssen (Adept, Order of Hermes).

Circle of Artemis

While the other cabals concern themselves with politics, arcane practices and the like, the Circle of Artemis works to maintain and improve Horizon's wonder, beauty and sense of hope. Some call this an impractical, short-sighted goal, but the Circle of Artemis thinks it necessary as a bulwark against the encroaching prosaism of the Technocratic paradigm. To the Circle, beauty takes all forms, from the peaked majesty of the Horizon Range to the solemn quietude of the Misty Moors and the sparkling geometry of the Crystal Bastions. On a more "pragmatic" note, the Circle monitors the ecosystem, inhibiting birth rates or even hunting species who get out of control. Whenever a new creature or plant is introduced, some member of the Circle tries to be around to consider the arrival's effect on Horizon's balance.

Current Members: Sugar O'Hare (Master, Cult of Ecstasy), Isis Windsong (Master, Verbena), Juliette Amber (Master, Verbena), Laird Mack (Master, Virtual Adepts), Toshiro Saito (Master, Dreamspeakers).



Servitors Principal

Not as highly regarded as Horizon's other cabals, the Servitors Principal nonetheless remain faithful to their duties of guarding Horizon and informing the Medeans (who monitor these nine Adepts) of security threats. This cabal maintains the passwords, maps, rendezvous locations to the Ways, and the flow of Quintessence through the Nodes to Horizon; collaborates with Horizon's guardians in assuring Horizon's safety; keeps tabs on espionage; and reviews the Realm's defenses annually and appeals to the Council for additional defensive and offensive Talismans and other equipment if required. Of all the cabals, the Servitors are the best informed about Horizon's geography, its weaknesses and strengths, its politics and anything else that might compromise the Council's mission, both internally and externally. When compromises occur (as they occasionally do), the Medeans convene Tribunals for the Servitors which all Council Members typically attend. While the other cabals tend to look down their noses at the Servitors Principal, they acknowledge their expertise and take the Servitors' warnings seriously.

Current Members: Zvolen Lucenik (Consultant, Majordomo of Horizon), Janos Sturvik (Primary Servitor, Adept, Order of Hermes), Amyn Kassim-Lakha (Adept, Akashic Brotherhood), Archana Naham (Adept, Celestial Chorus), Valarie Seaburg (Adept, Cult of Ecstasy), Tuya "Dancing Bird" Brownman (Adept, Dreamspeakers), Francis Trask (Adept, Euthanatos), Sang Ngoc Tran (Adept, Sons of Ether), Neal B. Birch (Adept, Verbena), Rich Carrasco (Adept, Virtual Adepts).

Custos

Numerous custos have chosen to live in Horizon, so far from the familiarity of Earth and its ways. In general, all custos in Horizon are well-regarded and much trusted, as they must undergo rigorous tests of character, skill and intelligence before given leave to enter.

Acolytes and Consors

Most of Horizon's acolytes and consors have to be flexible thinkers because, as their favorite adage goes, "We're not in Kansas anymore!" While they're well-remunerated financially, educationally and so forth, custos need this mental flexibility when Horizon's sheer oddity catches up with them.

While few acolytes understand everything that goes around them, they can't be kept from the obvious knowledge that they're not on Earth. Consors, on the other hand, may actively study this strange new world. On the whole, both Horizon's acolytes and consors represent the *crème de la crème* of Earth's custos because the mages who brought them here are themselves the Traditions' best.

Horizon isn't strange to all custos, however; some regard Horizon as the norm, and are far more comfortable with it than many Earth-born mages would be. This group includes both those custos who were born on Horizon and those who were not born on Earth (Umbrood, for instance). Acolytes within these groups tend to be more cosmopolitan in attitude and adapt more readily to strange situations than their Earth-born cousins do, but they lack familiarity with Earth's — and hence, many mages' — customs and expectations.

Custos' jobs within Horizon vary drastically. Some acolytes tend the gardens of Sruth na Mbláth, while others serve as sentries, farmers, lab technicians, cooks, chandlers, pages, minstrels, grooms, drivers, cup bearers, marshals, secretaries or woodwards. Consors draw higher-level duties such as piloting Cloudships, forging new trails across Posht or assisting Nichodemus Mulhouse with the cataloging of new books.

Citizens

Concordia's outlying villages are comprised of many people with no direct ties to the mages at all: farmers, craftsmen, nomads, townspeople and such. Some descend from sorcerers who have passed on, while others were (or remain) refugees from endangered cultures. Some left the cities to pursue their independence, while others simply prefer a rural lifestyle. Certain villages, especially those farthest from Concordia, might host mages who do not wish to be disturbed, but few actually owe fealty to them. Some villages began as the home of ancestral custos, whose families arrived in Horizon in the late 1400s, while others were built by mythical beings, Umbrood or native refugees from the Americas and Africa, who preserve their ancient heritage far from Concordia's influence.

Familiars

Popular on Horizon, familiars can be found almost everywhere mages can be found, with one exception: the Archives building. After the Etherite Dr. Amadeus Backthwaite's monkey familiar took a mischievous interest in discovering the airspeed velocity of various tomes flung out the Archives' windows, Nichodemus Mulhouse threw a fit (and the familiar) out the window, too. To date, Mulhouse maintains a ward against all creatures except humans at every entrance to the Archives — especially the windows.

Guardians

On top of the mage and custos forces, Horizon counts several hundred Bygones among its guardians. Several exceptional creatures have been detailed in Chapter Five, but many others (including many that remain unknown on Earth) protect the Realm, its Nodes and its Ways.

The Social Order

Horizon's social order has evolved over time into a relatively democratic form, with elected officials, courts of law and equitable restitution. Nonetheless, some holdovers from the Mythic Age still exist: certámen, ordeals and trial without jury in certain cases. As noted earlier, Horizon, in general, resembles a giant Chantry, a magickocracy where the mages set the rules (and often enforce them). The "commoner" citizens may vote on laws and bureaucrats, but no one forgets that the whole system — the whole world, for that matter — exists at the wizards' pleasure. This makes for occasional tensions that have little to do with Council politics, but everything to do with freedom.

Government

Horizon's government consists of the Consul; the Council of Nine; the nine *Reguli* and the Medeans, as well as a host of adjutants (Adepts who serve archmages) and custos. The Consul directs the proceedings of the Council of Nine; the Council of Nine makes policy for Horizon and the Traditions; the *Reguli* handle the daily governmental issues of Concordia; and the Medeans serve as judges in legal cases that aren't large enough to bring to Tribunal.

- **The Consul:** Rather than appointing one Consul for any length of time as is usually done in Horizon Realms, here the duty shifts every three months from one Council Member to another. Thus, every Tradition represents itself at the Council Table as well as in Horizon's government as a whole.

- **Elections:** Each Tradition elects a representative to the Council of Nine according to its custom (the Hermetics by merciless politicking, Dreamspeakers through visions, Etherites through innovative theories, and so forth). Elections usually occur at ancestral Chantries and are the right of resident archmages or elders there. Representatives may occupy the Seat for life, if their Tradition allows.

• **The Reguli:** Un-Awakened folk vote on the lesser bureaucrats who see to the daily affairs around Concordia. Most offices have five-year terms, although many minor posts are appointed by elected officials. Outside the main city, dozens of governments exist (see “Outlying Communities”). So long as they do not interfere with the larger commonwealth, these communities conduct their affairs in whatever manner they choose.

• **Tribunals:** On Horizon, Tribunals work exactly as described in *Mage Second Edition*. Tribunals regarding high-level, inter-Tradition conflicts and concerns are convened in Horizon’s Council Chamber, are brought to order by the Consul Proxy who called the Tribunal, and are conducted by the Consul. Ordinary legal matters, including civil trials, have no place in a Tribunal, while state offenses (such as espionage, treason or Infernalism) do. Tribunal-level punishments are severe, including Censure, Branding, ostracism, death and Gilgal.

Politics

While politicking in Horizon isn’t nearly as deadly as it is in Doissetep, it can be just as subtle and aggressive. In general, those mages who have no head for politics are often quickly outmaneuvered and resign their positions in a blaze of embarrassing publicity.

Hot contemporary issues are listed below. These issues’ current Council proponents and opponents are listed beneath the proposal, with reasons for their agreement or disagreement in parentheses. These disputes may inspire any number of story ideas, intrigues and adventures. Perhaps the actions of your players’ cabal will swing the issue to some conclusion and make new history for the Realm — and perhaps for the Traditions as a whole.

• **Should we institute the Ambassador Program?:** A proposed program in which mages are apprenticed under multiple Traditions to gain wider perspective.

The proposal’s controversial facets include: a) divulging Tradition secrets (greater risk of espionage), b) wasted resources (retraining issues), c) prejudice (members of other Traditions are not believed capable of certain types of magick), d) admissions bureaucracy, and e) lack of interest on the part of trainees. Benefits could include 1) greater inter-Tradition cooperation and trust, 2) a more united front in the Ascension War and 3) a greater understanding of magick.

Opponents: Sao Cristavao (a, b, c, 2 — i.e., he feels that, while the program might produce a more united set of Traditions (2, above), it is a pipe-dream: It risks damaging espionage (a), wasted resources (b) and mages unable to grasp the Hermetic Arts (c)), Spence (b, c, e, 3), Hyemyong S'unim (b, d, e, 3), Thackery (b, c, e), Taktsang (b, c, d, 1).

Proponents: [Porthos (1, 2, 3, d)], Bantu (1), Marianna (1, 2, d), Smithson (2), Quay (1, 2, 3, d).

• **Who is to occupy the 10th Seat?:** Since the mysterious symbol appeared on the 10th Council Seat, each of the Traditions has been trying to gain the Seat for themselves —

another Seat would mean more influence, and everyone knows it. Since the question has reached a stalemate, the new debate concerns whether or not the Hollow Ones should be accepted as the 10th Tradition and occupy the Seat.

Opponents argue that a) the Hollow Ones aren’t mature, savvy or disciplined enough to hold a position of such great importance, b) the balance of power would be upset, c) risking secrets on their undisciplined, selfish, mercenary streak is unwise, and d) their vision is not one of Ascension. **Proponents** argue that the Hollow Ones 1) offer fresh ideas, 2) offer a vitality and independence that the older Traditions have lost, 3) should not be left to the mercy of the Technocracy, and 4) are numerologically symbolic of rebirth and thus should be pursued.

Opponents: Bantu (a, b, d, 1, 2), Taktsang (a, b, c, d, 3), Sao Cristavao (a, b, c, d), Spence (a), Thackery (a, b, d, 2).

Proponents: [Porthos (1, 2, 3, 4, b)], Hyemyong S'unim (1, 3, c), Marianna (1, 2, 3, d), Smithson (1, 2, 3), Quay (1, 2, 3, b).

• **Can we risk full-scale educational reform favoring the Traditions’ views?:** For two decades, this has been a controversial topic among Tradition leaders, many of whom see Sleeper education as the only way to alter the current paradigm. Proposed reforms include the introduction of courses in holistic and alternative medicines, religions, philosophies, mathematics and sciences, as well as in literature and writing.

Opponents argue that such reforms a) risk the teachers involved, b) require too many resources to maintain, c) could be accomplished in more secretive ways, and d) should be prioritized, but none of the Tradition leaders can agree on which are most important. **Proponents** say these reforms are simply the best (or only) way to change the paradigm.

Opponents: Bantu (c), Taktsang (a, b, c), Spence (a, b, d), Thackery (a, b).

Proponents: [Porthos 1, a], Hyemyong S'unim (1, d), Marianna (1, a), Smithson (1), Sao Cristavao (1, a, d), Quay (1, a).

• **Should the Sphere paradigm be abandoned for something less formal (less Hermetic)?:** The Traditions inherited the legacy of a largely Hermetic paradigm: the division of magick into discrete units and their assignment to groups practicing specific philosophies regardless of the wide differences among mages even within the same group (i.e. Tradition) or philosophy. A movement to reexamine this paradigm has sprung up recently, and it is large enough to warrant a Council vote.

Opponents argue that a) the Traditions need a *lingua franca*, which the Spheres represent (regardless of terminology), and b) why fix what isn’t broken? **Proponents** say that the Spheres 1) create a mentality of division among the Traditions, and 2) don’t accurately represent, and thus limit, the range of magick currently practiced.

Opponents: [Porthos a, b], Hyemyong S'unim (a, 2), Taktsang (a, b), Sao Cristavao (a, b), Spence (a, b), Thackery (a).

Proponents: Bantu (1, a), Marianna (1), Smithson (1, 2), Quay(1, 2).



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Chapter Four: Storytelling

*Enter to grow in wisdom. Depart to serve better thy country
and mankind.*

— Charles William Eliot, inscription on the gate to
Harvard Yard (1890)



The summer sun shines high and hot, and forest trails lie clear for flight and for pursuit. Fruit grows on the branch, and insects suck its life; blood flows in the veins and on the ground, lovers sing in one another's ears, nations mass their armies. The warmth of Heaven is the same as the heat of Hell. When perfervid beauty circumscribes the battlefield, what is the virtue of summer? What comes of this mingled grace and corruption? The wise one knows. Though hunters in full vigor lurk in every shadow, though the shimmer of the haze betokens power all around, the wise one

(and who forgets that “wise one” led to “wizard?”) knows the truest value that summer brings: light of wisdom, light shining on the path, everlasting light.

“So where does my game figure into this?”

Good question. Storytellers faced with the immensity of Horizon may feel lost. Players confronting its labyrinthine ways may feel overwhelmed. Where does a game set in Horizon begin? And where can it go from there? What can you do in a Realm where legends walk, especially if you’re not a legend yourself? Good questions, all. Let’s see what we can do to answer them....

The Horizon Chronicle



Most Horizon tales will begin from one of two perspectives: The players will either be visitors to the Realm or longtime residents. Naturally, you can have a group composed of visitors *and* residents, but things have to start somewhere.

Bringing your troupe to Horizon for a visit is the best way to integrate the Realm into an ongoing chronicle; once there, they might meet new characters who've lived there for some time (an ideal way to introduce new players to your game, or to "retire" old ones in favor of a change of pace). "Tenant" chronicles usually start fresh and work outward from Horizon, venturing across the other Realms, and even perhaps to Earth. Imagine the culture clashes that might arise when lifetime Horizon residents encounter the Gothic-Punk world! As the saying goes, "You ain't from *around* here, are you?" Not that the same misadventures can't befall first-time visitors — especially if they come for the wrong reasons....

Visitors

Who among the Awakened has not heard of Horizon? Each new Council mystick learns its story, for its history is inevitably bound up with that of his own Tradition. The Technocracy treats Horizon as a symbolic fortress of the enemy, like the Kremlin or Beijing's Forbidden City. Even Orphans—and Nephandi—soon hear of Horizon, perhaps in breezy conversation at the Spy's Demise. Willworkers know Horizon as Sleepers know the United Nations: the Tellurian's most prominent organization devoted to accomplishing nothing. To date no one has thought much of it, but most everyone has agreed that, like the U.N., Horizon's existence offers certain conveniences.

Not many mages have visited Horizon, relatively speaking, but everyone seems to know someone who has. In theory, every Tradition mage is welcome. Only a fraction of them ever visit, though. Most journey here for one of four reasons:

Resources and Ceremonies

The first two reasons are legitimate. Most often, visitors exploit the Chantry's monumental resources: Verbena coven leader Mildred Dunning-White of Sussex visits the greenhouse each month for a sprig of wintergreen grown under light funneled in from the Shard Realm of Forces. Pakistan's Sarraju Narimpalli enters the Euthanatos subrealm to hear Takashi Irakamura's lecture, "Hara-kiri: Practice and Results." And each year hundreds of mysticks, including Orphans and Hollow Ones, consult the vast Chantry Archives.

The other legal cause to visit arises when a Tradition leader finds it convenient to deliver an important statement or call a Tribunal in Horizon's superb facilities. When leaders of the players' Traditions announce "ambassador" programs to other Tradition strongholds (see **Chapter One**, Scene 8), the announcements will most likely be made in one of the conference rooms near Horizon's Council Chamber.

In both these cases, a mage gains permission to visit Horizon through a well-placed Chantry leader or mentor, or simply through a query over the Digital Web to "HORIZON." A return communiqué, which may be as mundane as a phone call or e-mail message, names a time and place for a rendezvous. The potential visitor arrives there, waits five or 10 minutes while Horizon agents scout out the situation and, if nothing looks untoward, an Adept appears and guides the visitor through the Umbra to Horizon. The same Adept remains with the visitor for the duration of the errand, and afterward escorts the visitor back to a second site near the original rendezvous. For safety reasons, the second site is a close secret; perhaps the Adept chooses it while in transit through the Gauntlet.

Joyriding

Those who visit Horizon for the third reason want no truck with permissions. A few headstrong young mages, their powers outstripping their judgment, try to sneak into Horizon just to see if they *can*. Obviously this shows the same sense that hackers demonstrate when they try to crack the Pentagon, and indeed, Horizon's would-be invaders usually *are* Virtual Adepts.

One such was Hong Kong's most notorious Adept, Henry Ouyang Chang, a.k.a. Enrico. One drunken night in 1987 at the Spy's Demise, he overheard another Adept assert that no one could possibly break into Horizon. So (of course) Enrico announced on the spot that before the night was out he would bring back the Virtual Adepts' chair from the Council Chamber. After Horizon custos caught Enrico 22 minutes later, far short of the Realm's gateway, they confiscated his computer and locked him in a small cell. Within four hours a Tribunal convened, tried and convicted Enrico. Citing the Fourth Protocol ("Betray not your Cabal or Chantry."), the justices ordered the intruder to be harmlessly but appropriately Branded and released, minus computer, under a year's Censure. To this day Enrico's Avatar carries on its forehead the legend LAME.

Though Horizon's formidable defenses catch most of the Enricos who break in, a few gifted and lucky mages get in and out safely. All report a harrowing journey—Captain Feedback is rumored to have compared it to "riding a roller coaster while sitting next to a werewolf." If Horizon custos

learn of the break-in afterward, they rarely seek revenge. Instead, they'll often pay the successful invader a rich fee in Tass to identify the weak points in their security.

Espionage

The final and most dangerous reason a willworker visits Horizon relates to the Chantry's increasingly central position in Tradition politics. From its inception, Horizon has drawn spies, mainly from Doissetep and the New World Order. Now, as it enters its Summer, the Realm suffers from incursions by the Technocracy's other Conventions; by Chantries anxious to gain favor from the archmages; and even by renegade mysticks who disapprove of cooperation between their own Tradition and its rivals. ("If we in the Freedom Razor are to make peace with the Akashics who offended us, we will make peace on our own terms!")

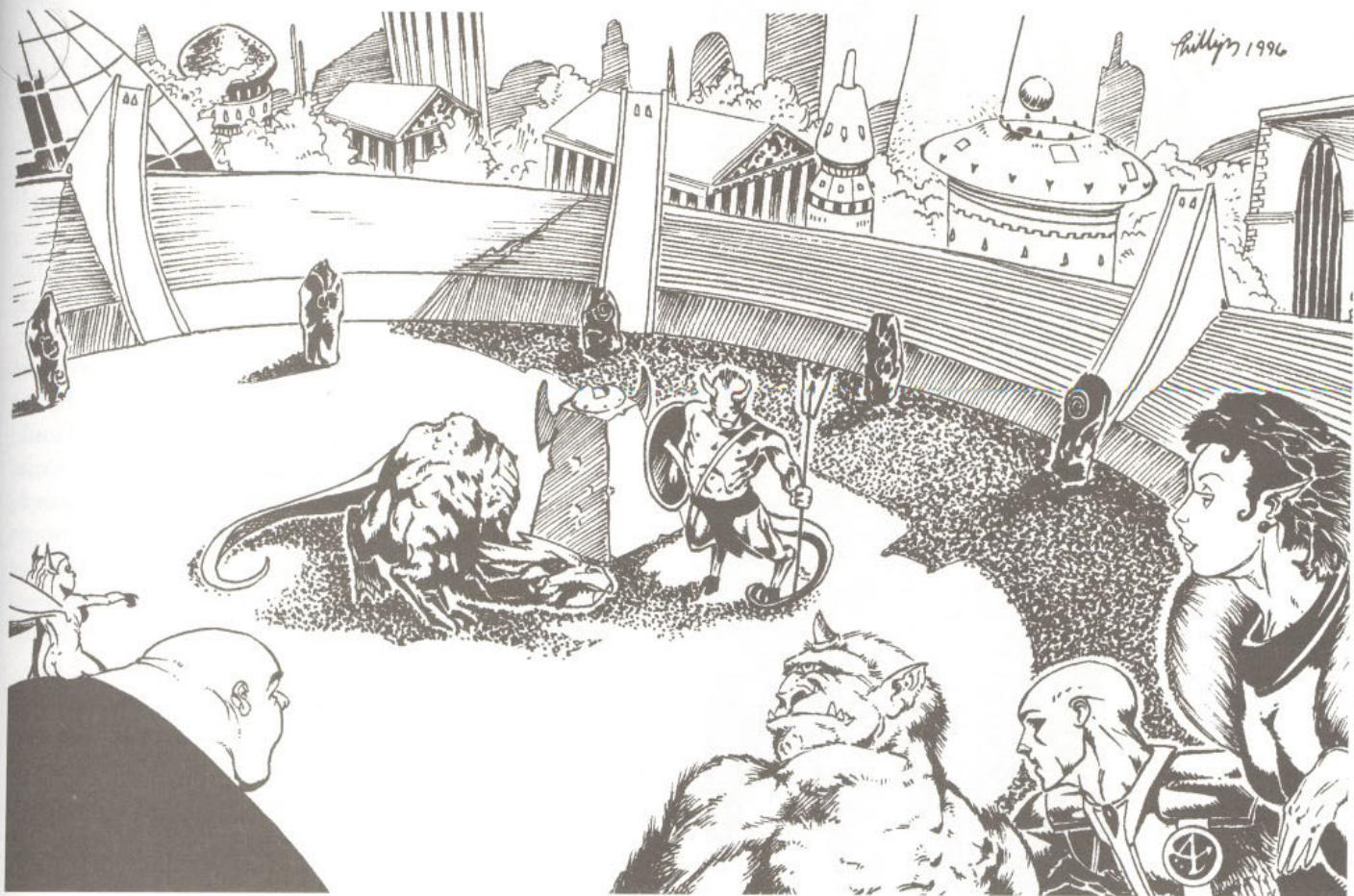
Spies report the movements of archmages, progress of plans relevant to their leaders and, above all, potential weak points in Horizon's prized network of Nodes. These places of power, more than any repository of texts or Talismans, are the Chantry's authentic treasure. For this reason, spies exhaustively document the abilities and movements of Horizon's nine Servitors Principal, the Adepts who maintain Quintessence flows to the Realm and its nine subrealms. Spies also labor to locate the Portals that guide the flows, and to name the spirits that guard each Portal. In all cases, these informants work in the most careful secrecy; the Council considers spying a serious offense.

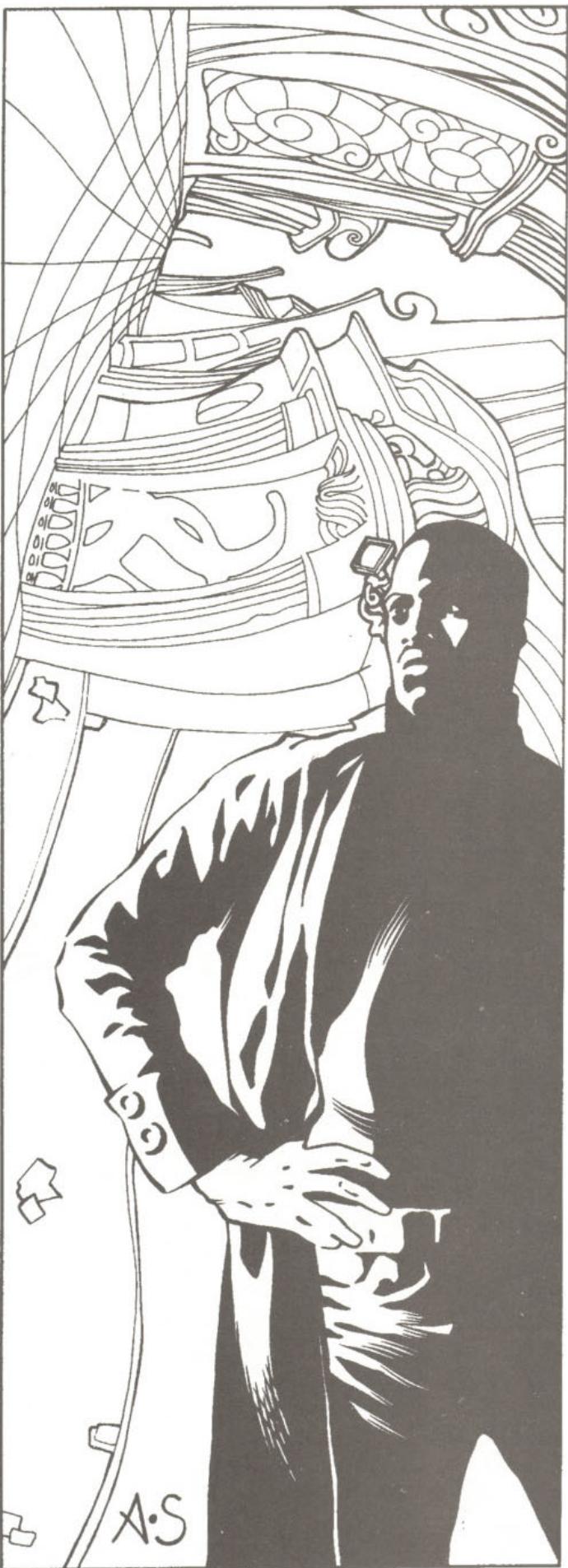
Over the centuries, spies have provided thorough information about the Realm to their employers. It is said that one of the reasons for Horizon's ever-changing nature is to foil would-be assaults. By the time an invasion comes, the landscape has altered somewhat, and who's to say what changes have occurred? Factions within the Traditions have avoided openly stealing from Horizon so far — out of fear of provoking civil war — but it could happen. The Technocracy lusts after the Chantry's Nodes, but does not want to risk the mighty conflict that would erupt from an open assault after so many have already failed. Nephandi and Marauders simply lack the power to pry away a Node, though occasional Fallen and Mad Ones creep in through little-watched corners....

A few individuals and factions will siphon Quintessence from certain Nodes. Theft, like spying, is a serious crime, undertaken in strictest confidence and with all possible protection against discovery. Mages in a Horizon chronicle can expect to spend much time locating spies and stopping Quintessence theft. (See Chapter Three, "Laws," for information on punishments.)

Tenants

Although most residents are born (or at least Awakened) in Horizon, visitors to Horizon sometimes wind up staying. Promising students may come here to undertake





extensive research projects or to serve a difficult apprenticeship to an archmage. A willworker may move a hunted acolyte or consor to Horizon to guarantee her safety. Mages of unusual talent and power may aid the Masters in setting directions for an entire Tradition. Most important, a powerful mystick's residence in Horizon is recognized as a landmark on the path to archmagery, a status based as much on political standing within the Awakened community as on power. Here are some of the roles player mages may take in a Horizon chronicle:

Adjutants

Even lesser willworkers in Horizon typically command far more power than beginning characters in a typical Mage chronicle do. Archmages employ assistants, or *adjutants*, who themselves have achieved Adept status in two or three Spheres and lesser competence in the rest. Only such broadly skilled agents can carry out the arcane yet vital missions that the Tradition leaders assign.

The role of Awakened adjutant to a powerful Master has unique attractions. An aide has a close and well-informed perspective on events that shake the Tellurian, as well as an instrumental role in enacting them, without the momentous responsibility of guiding them. Archmages are big targets, but adjutants can exert invisible influence. As a Master's messenger, an assistant can enter and safely leave realms — Ancestral Chantries, Umbral Courts, even Technocracy Constructs — that she could never hope to see otherwise.

Adjutants gain benefits and endure restrictions. They have the ear of world-shaking leaders, but must obey orders, too. On a mission, these mysticks often have great latitude of action, but they do not set their own goals. ("I don't care how you reach Skultos Island," says Alexis Hastings, "but I need the pterodactyl egg intact!")

Service to an archmage offers protection from foes who don't dare antagonize her, such as weak Umbrood and lesser diabolists. But when dealing with Syndicate Enforcers who are looking for a hostage, rival Tradition mages who are seeking revenge or Nephandi who want a path to the top — the adjutant might as well wear a target on his chest. Think of a journalist covering a war on the front lines: To some combatants he's strictly hands-off, but in other places everybody wants him dead.

So why doesn't the archmage just step in and solve the players' problems? This problem resembles that of any character who has a four- or five-dot Mentor, and the same solutions apply. Archmages frequently vanish without notice on unknowable missions. Their hands may be tied by political problems. ("If someone happened to destroy that Euthanatos *barabbi*," Elihu Witz says in a low voice, "it would probably be for the best, even though he's the son of the Adept in charge of our subrealm's Node. But I don't know anything about it, if you

take my meaning.") Worst of all, at least from the players' view, the Master may size up their plight and say, "I believe you can handle this yourself." Think of the king, queen and Lord Buckingham in *The Three Musketeers*. Though the Musketeers worked for the good of all three, when fighting began, they were on their own.

An archmage in an adjutant chronicle is not a *deus ex machina* who will ride in and save everyone. Instead, the Master functions in the same way as any Mentor: as a source of advice, exposition and the occasional vital clue.

Custos

The Mage supplement *Ascension's Right Hand* describes the merits of a chronicle devoted entirely to un-Awakened characters — acolytes, consorts and familiars. Certain troupes are very appropriate to a Horizon story line: Chantry guards, who fend off attacks and ferret out spies; a cabal of familiars, who patrol the Node network and learn about the mysteries of the Umbra; and perhaps the most appropriate custos troupe in Horizon, the servants to its mages. In Horizon, these stories become intense for two reasons: a tight focus and exceedingly high stakes.

• **Focus:** A custos chronicle need never leave Horizon. The Chantry's dozens of mages, hundreds of servants, exhaustive resources and lengthy history offer all the plot elements a Storyteller requires. Over many sessions, the relationships between players and Storyteller characters develop new depths and directions. Intrigues grow more complex, goals more mercurial. Stories could resemble the old British television series *Upstairs, Downstairs*, with strong contrasts between the "downstairs" custos and their seemingly all-powerful supervisors.

Though insulated from the random violence of Earth-bound custos chronicles, nonmages in Horizon may find it even harder than usual to decipher the motives of the ruling wizards. These enlightened beings make considerate masters and mistresses, but their concerns may appear impenetrable. Agatha Marsh sends three guards to the Hermetic subrealm to return one borrowed book; when they arrive, Master Sao Cristavao examines the book closely, peers at each guard's hands and demands that each custos immediately soak his hands in a basin of lye. He sends the players back to Marsh with a cryptic message. When they report this, Marsh sends them to spy on the Hermetic Master to see what he does with the lye. And so on. The way the custos handle these enigmatic exchanges makes the difference between minor friction and an outright feud.

• **High Stakes:** In Horizon, intrigue is both momentous and inevitable. As *Ascension's Right Hand* puts it, custos "must gain their information from overheard snippets of conversation, back-stairs gossip and hasty summaries." In Horizon, custos have still more reason to listen carefully; each whispered word may be significant for the entire Ascension War.

In Horizon, more so than in mundane settings, the Storyteller can easily incite a world-shaking crisis and throw the troupe straight into its center. An insidious Progenitor attack incapacitates all Awakened beings in the Realm with a disease resembling the Paradox spirit Prokaryote (*Mage Second Edition*, p. 284); only the custos can fend off the ensuing attack and summon help from the Deep Umbra — if help it is. How easily could you conjure this plot for a custos chronicle set in, say, Albuquerque?

Service by Essence

"Don't try to pigeonhole me through some sort of archaic formula, you freak! I make my own decisions! Me! I'm not some kind of 'Essence...'"

"...I am a free man! Ha ha ha ha!"

"Wiseass."

— Exchange overheard in the Red Griffin Inn

Characters who remain in Horizon for any length of time will be given something to do. The Realm may be a refuge, but it's not a free ride. Even archmages who plan to sample Horizon's hospitality will be asked to contribute to the Realm's well-being. It's a good idea to agree; refusal to assist, especially when one is asked directly, is considered to be extremely discourteous. A mage — especially a visitor — who does so may find himself without friends just when he needs them most. If he wants to be welcome around Concordia, he'll oblige.

This is an exciting time to be around. As Spring warms to Summer, a servitor of the Realm can find plenty to do. Duties are usually commissioned by one of the cabals; the Medeans might ask for a hand with Realm security, the Fresh Wind Covenant would request some diplomatic help, and the Circle of Artemis could offer a new resident a chance to help do some "groundskeeping." Although no one actually "assigns" duties by a mage's Essence, you can get a good idea of the kinds of tasks that would suit a given willworker by the goals that guide him.

Springtime

Horizon's unique status makes any activity — battle, exploration, hunting, even research — grander, more significant and more dramatic than it would be otherwise. Aside from the mad willworkers of Doissetep, only Horizon mages inhabit a Realm so large and powerful.

Horizon's servitors have their work cut out for them during a Spring phase. Pattern Essence mysticks may root out spies, defeat intrigues, maintain the morale of Portal guardians and sustain the Realm's huge Quintessence flow. Dynamic mages carry out missions at the behest of the archmages; if they're Masters themselves, they might recruit new custos and allies or travel as emissaries to other Chantries and beyond.

Primordial mages tend to protect the Nodes of the National Park system. This may involve political maneuvering in Congress as well as front-line defense against overeager land developers. Primordial mysticks also search the wilds of the world for new places of power, while mages following a Questing Essence work for unity among the Traditions — a bitter struggle at this time in history.

Summer

During the turbulent crossover from one season to the next, player mages should recognize that they act under the eye of history. Their deeds will have endless, unpredictable repercussions, and the stakes will demand their greatest efforts.

Now Pattern and Questing mages work together to heal long-held Council rivalries, setting up cross-Tradition training and "ambassador" programs. Whatever their rank or Tradition, such mages often make diplomatic visits, with full Council authority, to many isolated and conservative Chantries (see *The Book of Chantries*). The message of cooperation must be spread. No matter how many mages inhabit Horizon, though, there never seem to be enough to go around.

Storytelling for Archmages



"Humility" is the expression on the face of the upstart braggart who comes face-to-face with a woman who can level a castle in her sleep.

— Susann Gwynne, Hermetic Apprentice, 1846

Of course, one attraction many players find in a Horizon campaign is the opportunity to associate with — and to play — the most powerful Awakened beings in the chronicle. This is feasible in Horizon, although it's best handled as a change of pace from the usual chronicle rather than as a full-fledged game. Before the story begins, Storytellers may want to briefly coach the players about the nature of archmagery — possibly the hard way. (See **Appendix**.)

In Winter Chantries such as Doissetep, the most powerful Masters are centuries old and quite insane. Their heightened awareness removes them from any practical human perspective: illumination without enlightenment. They may have lived to see empires crumble and may command the hurricane winds themselves, but such Masters are, in some respects, nearly inhuman.

In contrast, Horizon's new generation of leaders is generally young — under a century old. Most have an enlightened view of life that's authentically sane, compassionate and practical. Though not without eccentricities, and not free of the politics they inherit from their predecessors, these archmages represent the best culmination of the willworker's quest for Arete. They are (as the Dalai Lama

War?

In emergencies, the Chantry may move to war. At some point Horizon must either confront Doissetep's authority, or fall to their intrigues. More than likely, the mad Hermets will provoke the conflict themselves, expecting that a preemptive strike will end the rivalry before it fairly begins. Even now, Doissetep plotters scheme to divert Horizon's Nodes away from the Council and channel their reserves into the elder Chantry. Any word of such plans could seriously disrupt relations between the two Realms — which may be a good thing!

A full-scale war between the two mega-Chantries could rock the mortal world. Most Tradition mages would give anything to avoid such a conflict, but just as real-world fanatics provoke wars with suicide bombings or nuclear terrorism, diehard mysticks may be willing to expose the Traditions to Paradox and the Technocracy both. Perhaps the Nephantic corruption has spread further than anyone realizes.... As you can imagine, a potential war could frame an entire epic chronicle in and of itself. Diverting that war would prove a true hero's quest. Fighting it may spell the beginning of the end....

put it) "flashes of lightning in the darkness." For player mages of lesser strength, they represent genuine role models.

What are the characteristics of such beings? Through sharp insight and diligent practice, Masters have achieved spiritual maturity. "To mature spiritually is to let go of rigid and idealistic ways of being and discover a flexibility and joy in our life," writes Jack Kornfield in his excellent book *A Path With Heart* (Bantam, 1993). Kornfield identifies 10 qualities of this maturity: nonidealism, kindness, patience, immediacy (allowing the Divine to shine through every action), a personal sense of the sacred, questioning, flexibility, a capacity to embrace opposites, a willing and compassionate relationship to all things and "ordinariness" (a simple presence in and gratitude for the moment).

Horizon's Masters exemplify these qualities. Not every archmage embodies them all, but each excels in one or more of them — though, as humans, the mages still have interesting flaws. The noteworthy trait all these people share is their unusual tolerance for different Traditions. Judging from the stereotypes presented in the *Mage* rulebook, the "typical" mage misunderstands all of the other Traditions. The archmages in Horizon, however, are atypical. They're far more enlightened than the usual run of magi. Through their greater understanding, these sorcerers might yet produce the "ambassador" program described at the end of Chapter One.

Still, these folks aren't perfect — by any means. In a crisis, when the future of the Traditions is on the line, count on the Masters to do the right thing. During less intense

situations, though, the Storyteller may occasionally give a Master's enhanced vision a skewed perspective. Visiting Los Angeles with the player mages, the Euthanatos Master passively watches an old woman get run down on the street. "It was all for the best," the archmage tells the astonished mysticks. "The woman had no relatives, cancer was eating her pancreas and she's not going to the Shadowlands." In these rare moments, the players can provide a useful corrective view that "re-grounds" the Master in the mortal world.

Master Play

Ironically, players who look forward to wielding world-shaking magick as archmages may find that they roll fewer dice and cast fewer Effects than they did as Disciples. In the first place, a Master's skill is such that the Storyteller can assume most Effects work flawlessly; she might call for a roll just to check for Paradox, but otherwise assume that minor Effects work flawlessly, especially within Horizon's magickal framework. In addition, archmages usually have formidable reputations and entire entourages of Adepts and consorts. If you were a typical Technocrat or Nephandus, would you attack an archmage?

The most effective stories that feature archmages are not about Really Big Magick. They're not standard Mage chronicles with all the knobs turned up, but something qualitatively different. Levitating mountains, fighting hand-to-tentacle with Outsider Things, carving out pocket universes — these tasks suit a 30th-level magic-user, not an enlightened and dynamic Tradition Master.

The Masters chronicle instead focuses on the culmination of each character's Essence. At this rank, the Dynamic mage now introduces new ideas across society, with the aim of reshaping the Tellurian. Chorus member Fatima Alzarahni works for religious reform and women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Dreamspeaker Toshiro Saito helps lead a Sleeper movement to set aside tracts of Hokkaido wilderness as parks. Dante, working through a political front group, undercuts the Internet Decency Act. To win success, each Master must overcome the subtlest efforts of the Technocracy — and the Sleepers.

The Questing mystick, by now, has moved well along the Path toward lifelong goals. Eiji (Edge) Yamakawa's meditations in the Brotherhood have long since taught him why he killed all those people in his last life, and how he can make worthy restitution to their heirs. Now he sees how to prevent other troubled spirits from succumbing as he once did. His mission will lead him to confront nightmarish Nephandi in the heart of their Labyrinth.

Primordial and Pattern mages now establish environments that let them use their insights to the fullest. Scientist Alexis Hastings, working through a Nobel Physics laureate for credibility, reworks the department at Southeastern University to give graduate students freedom of inquiry. Lady Charlotte Quay, having helped unite Horizon, next





establishes a Primal College for Orphans in the Summer Grove Realm. These achievements may come only after dangerous confrontations with the Technocracy, rival Traditions, other beings or simple stubborn Sleepers.

All of these chronicles work best with no more than two or three players. The story lines minimize heavy-duty combat in favor of ideas that manifest through the Awakened will. This is, of course, magick in the most literal sense.

Story Ideas



Storytellers may want to develop Horizon story ideas around the seeds that follow:

- **A Dangerous Valentine:** Porthos' apprentice falls in love with one of the characters and the old archmage doesn't like it... not one bit.
- **Prying Archaeologists:** The Council learns of a plan to excavate the park Midan saad Zaghloul under which Horizon's Alexandrian Node rests. The characters are dispatched to deal with the problem.

• **Fanged Retrieval:** The powerful Transylvanian vampire (a Tzimisce) who turned Zvolen Lucenik into a ghoul has stored valuable information in the recesses of the Majordomo's brain. He sends his retainers out to find him—carefully.

• **Disappearing Wilderness:** The Council hears of the Technocracy's plans to allow corporate building in America's National Park system and sets the characters to work on thwarting these plans.

• **Educational Reform:** A Council archmage asks the characters to campaign throughout Horizon and the major ancestral Tradition Chantries for educational reform, despite opposition from heavy-hitting Council mages Indrani Taktsang and Julian Spence.

• **Old Rivals:** Doissetep charges the Council of Nine with spying on their cabals, releasing to all ancestral Chantries potentially damaging information about the Council and the Realm's hidden portals. The Council enlists the characters' diplomatic aid in disproving these charges and quieting Doissetep.

- **Stalking the Nightmare:** Horizon is a wonderful place for hunting: no game wardens, no limit, exotic creatures in abundant numbers... Of course, Bygones are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves, the hunters are on strange ground and many of the local mages won't appreciate a bunch of thrill-seekers chasing the wildlife....

- **Lonely Guardian:** Desiduous Mevara is lonely for loving companionship, so the Servitors Principle (acting against Porthos' advice) ask the characters to find him a mate in order to boost his morale. Where might they go, and what might they find? And how might they bring it back here?

- **The Storm:** While on some journey, the characters end up trapped by a wild storm. This could be a blizzard, hurricane, tornado or some magickal phenomena alien to Earth. Imagine being trapped out in the open — no house, no lights — while the worst tempest you can conceive of howls around you. Scary? Hmm...

- **Ambassadors to...Jellyfish?:** The Council assigns the characters to serve as ambassadors between the Traditions and the Juash, highly intelligent undersea creatures from Triton's Deep that resemble jellyfish. The only problem is that the entire colony has disappeared without a trace.

- **Eldritch Allies:** The characters are posted as guards to the Labyrinth beneath the Council Chambers, where the rumored faerie portal opens. The fae appear and spirit the characters away to Arcadia Gateway (see **Umbra: The Velvet Shadow**), where they are asked to renew an old alliance.

- **Heroes of Deregulation:** Congress — under the influence of mortal greed and the Technocratic World Advisory Council — has passed a bill to regulate the use of the Internet and to install tapping devices and devices monitoring TV usage in every set. The characters are dispatched to rouse Sleeper interest in fighting the bill. Blowing stuff up is out of the question; the characters must be subtle or else they risk bringing down a modern-day witch-hunt. Certain groups would be quite happy to have proven "occult conspiracies" to boost their ranks....



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Chapter Five: Characters

Character is a fact, and that is much in a world of pretense and concession.

— A. Bronson Alcott, *Table Talk*



Impressive as the Realm itself may be, the people who dwell in Horizon are its true life force. Although most outsiders think the place is populated by mages alone, Horizon shelters over 30,000 human inhabitants and countless By-gones, animals and weird spirits. Obviously, a single sourcebook cannot detail 30,000 people, or even the roughly 150 wizards who call the Realm home. The following templates allow you, the Storyteller, to customize the many personalities as you will. A few notable characters have been offered afterward.

Obviously, an individual's Trait ratings may vary from the template; these are averages only. The "Optional Abilities" section presents a handful of extra Abilities that a member of that given group might possess. A minor charac-

ter may have one or two such options, a competent character might have three to five and a really important character would have at least five and possibly all of them. Backgrounds rated at 6+ have resources beyond most mortals' means. In the long run, however, point totals are unimportant; the real test of a character will be in making him memorable to your players.

Council Guards

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3 to 5, Dodge 3, Do 1, Drive 1, Firearms 4, First Aid 2, Melee 3 to 4, Cosmology 2, Investigation 2, Law (Horizon) 2

Optional Abilities: Awareness 2, Carousing 2, Diplomacy 2, Intimidation 3, Intrigue 2, Search 3, Streetwise 2, Archery 3, Crafts 2, Heavy Weapons 3, Leadership 2, Meditation 2, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Technology 2, Torture 2, Chantry Politics 1 to 3, Linguistics 2 to 4, Lore (Traditions, Technocracy, Spirit, Familiar, or even Garou, faerie or Kindred) 2 to 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Influence (Concordia) 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 4 to 6

Equipment: Uniform (elaborate red, green and black uniform for the Council Chamber guards, black with blue accents for Concordia police, royal blue with green accents for Servitors Principal and Medean consors), Weapons (typically a sword, stungun and bladed polearm for Council guards, sword and stungun for all others), Wrist Communicator

Notes: Most guards have excellent morale and are well-trained to handle weird or powerful entities. They're not easily impressed, but not suicidal, either. Their stunguns and wrist communicators were whipped up by the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts; the former do no permanent injury, but simply hurt. The stats for these weapons are:

Name	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip
Stungun	5	7	20	2	10
Stun Rifle	6	8	30	3	30

Typical Consoor

Attributes: Strength 2 to 4, Dexterity 2 to 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 2 to 4, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Research 2 to 4, Cosmology 2, Lore (any) 2, Occult 2

Optional Abilities: Athletics 2 to 4, Brawl 2 to 4, Carousing 3, Diplomacy 2 to 5, Intrigue 3, Intuition 3, Scrounging 2, Seduction 2 to 4, Streetwise 3, Style 2, Subterfuge 2, Acrobatics 2 to 4, Animal Training 2, Crafts 2, Dancing 3, Fast-Talk 2, Firearms 3, First Aid 2, Hunting 3, Melee 3, Pilot 3, Ride 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Technology 1 to 4, Tracking 4, Traps 2, Chantry Politics 1 to 5, Computer 1 to 4, Culture 2, Law 1 to 3, Linguistics 1 to 5, Medicine 1 to 4, Science 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor (mage) 2 to 5, Resources 2 to 5

Willpower: 5

Equipment: Bodyguard: Weapons, Body Armor, Protective Minor Talisman; Assistant: Books, Library, Computer, Vehicle; Steward: Uniform, Protective Minor Talisman, Log Book

Note: This covers a typical mage's sidekick. The following books offer more elaborate options for familiars and other powerful companions: *Ascension's Right Hand*, *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Changeling: The Dreaming*, *Project Twilight*, *World of Darkness*: Gypsies and even *Freak Legion* (if your mage is really screwed up).

Apprentice

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Meditation 2, Melee 2, Research 3, Lore (Traditions) 2, Occult 3

Optional Abilities: Athletics 2, Diplomacy 1, Expression 2, Intrigue 2, Intuition 2, Streetwise 2, Acrobatics 2, Crafts 2, Dancing 2, Do 1, Firearms 2, Hunting 2, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Technology 3, Chantry Politics 1, Computer 2 to 4, Enigmas 2, Medicine 1, Science 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, any other at 1 to 2

Spheres: One or two dots in any Sphere

Arete: 1 or 2

Willpower: 3

Quintessence: 2

Paradox: 4 (from mistakes)

Equipment: Foci, clothing (from robes to suits to black leather, as befits Tradition), nearby weapon (if expecting danger)

Note: Obviously, a mage's Traits and Equipment will vary from Tradition to Tradition. A Cultist of Ecstasy may have high Expression and Culture ratings and wear loose neo-tribal clothing, whereas a Hermetic apprentice dresses conservatively and must excel at Research and Intuition. Let the character be your guide.

Adept

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Subterfuge 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Meditation 3, Research 4, Technology 1 to 4, Cosmology 2 to 5, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 3 to 5, Lore (any) 2 to 4, Occult 4

Optional Abilities: Athletics 2 to 5, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Instruction 3, Intrigue 2 to 3, Intuition 3, Streetwise 3, Do 3, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Chantry Politics 2, Computer 2 to 5, History 3, Science 2 to 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 3, Chantry 2, Library 3, Talisman 1 to 4

Spheres: 10 to 15 dots in any combination of Spheres

Arete: 4 to 6

Willpower: 6 to 8

Quintessence: 8

Paradox: 3

Equipment: (See above.)

Note: A slightly toned-down Adept can be used as a medium-level Disciple. The Traits chosen reflect the isolated, formal nature of Horizon. An Earthside mage may have different combinations.

Master

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 to 5, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4 to 5

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Expression 3, Instruction 3, Intuition 3, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Meditation 4, Research 4 to 5, Cosmology 3 to 5, Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3 to 5, Lore (several kinds) 2 to 5, Occult 5

Optional Abilities: Athletics 3 to 5, Brawl 3 to 5, Dodge 3, Expression 4, Instruction 4, Intrigue 4, Streetwise 4, Do 4 to 5, Stealth 5, Survival 4, Technology 5, Chantry Politics 4, Computer 5, History 4, Medicine 3 to 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Arcane 2, Avatar 3 to 5, Chantry 3 to 5, Familiar 2 to 5, Influence 2, Library 5+, Resources 4, Sanctum 2 to 5, Talisman 2 to 5

Spheres: 15 to 30 dots in any combination, at least 5 in one

Arete: 8 to 10

Willpower: 8 to 10

Quintessence: 15

Paradox: 0 to 15 (How careful is he?)

Equipment: (See above.)

Notes: Most Council representatives fit this profile. Wizards at the lower end are less than a century old, while those with 20 dots or more in their Spheres have been around for at least 100 years.

Archmage

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 1 to 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1 to 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 2 to 5

Abilities: (anything you like at 3 to 5 dots)

Optional Abilities: (anything you like at 3 to 5 dots)

Backgrounds: Allies 6+, Arcane 5, Avatar 5, Chantry 3 to 5, Destiny 4, Familiar 5, Influence 1 to 5, Library 6+, Node 2 to 5, Resources 6+, Sanctum 5, Talisman 2 to 5

Spheres: 30 to 45 dots in any combination, at least 5 in four and possibly 6 in one or two

Arete: 10

Willpower: 10

Quintessence: 15+

Paradox: 0 or lots

Equipment: (See above, although foci and weapons are rare at this stage.)

Notes: The handful of archmages who exist are a varied lot. Some are amazingly charismatic and physically perfect specimens, while others are tottering ancients with addled minds. Unless an archmage takes pains to conceal her nature, the aura of power she projects will be obvious even to Sleepers. These mages are often centuries old, and can be unpredictable.

The Council of Nine

The mysticks below compose the current representatives of the Council of Nine. This may soon change if Porthos has his way. For now, however, the following Masters speak for their respective groups. Each has a number of Adepts and apprentices who serve as personal assistants and who command great influence among the Realm's Awakened population. Even the great archmages, who may outrank them for sheer age and power, listen to what they have to say.

With the exception of Hyemy'ong *S'unim* and Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao, the following Council representatives can be considered "Masters" in regards to their template abilities. The two exceptions are "Archmages" instead. Other characters mentioned throughout this sourcebook can be found in *Hidden Lore*, *The Book of Chantries*, *Cult of Ecstasy*, *Virtual Adepts* and *Mage Second Edition*.

Hyemy'ong *S'unim* ("Brightness of Wisdom")

Titles: Seat of Mind (Akashic Brotherhood). Master of Mind, Spirit, Life and Forces. Akashic Ambassador to Horizon. Holds no other seats except Master of Sambo Chongch'al, Horizon's Akashic subrealm.

Background: Before his 1578 Awakening in a Korean monastery, Hyemy'ong rose through the monastic ranks, gaining the immense respect of both the monks and the laity for his wisdom and empathy. It had helped that he was an abandoned infant with the mark of the *tulku* (reincarnation) of the last Choson Emperor. Though an eminent monk, Hyemy'ong always wrestled his superiors' will with his lighthearted approach to life. At 16, when his insubor-



dination proved insuperable, his superiors ejected him from the monastery, causing him to lose face and to confront a life he'd never known: that of the laity.

Armed with an indomitable spirit, Hyemyong nevertheless faced his humiliation and—in the process of finding his way in the world outside the monastery—he Awakened. Now, having risen through wisdom, application and amiability through the Akashic ranks to speak before the Council of Nine, Hyemyong still treats everything with a certain breeziness that belies the complexity of his thinking, but at the same time shakes others' faith in him.

Image: A short, thin Korean man; his apparent age is around 55. Shaved head, round face with rosy cheeks, gentle, laughing eyes, pursed smile. Flame-shaped birthmark on neck. Hyemyong hides his small, graceful frame beneath a patched *turumagi* (outer jacket), which hangs over a gray shirt and part of his baggy gray pants and pair of leggings. During Council sessions, Hyemyong wears his purple *changsam* (formal robe) over these clothes.

Roleplaying Hints: Unlike the older Council archmages, you have aged very well, keeping current with the "youth" (mages less than 100 years old), even espousing the introduction of the Hollow Ones to the Traditions and the Council. Still, you feel archaic and often foreign before this new generation. As with everything else, you try to conceal this insecurity behind jests that most mages just don't get.

Quote: *Hollow Ones? Of course we should consider them a Tradition. They are like Wandering Ones without Burnt Fingers! Hah, hah, hah!*

Najjda Bantu

Titles: Seat of Prime (Celestial Chorus). The Eminent Precisian and Prima Councilor Najjda Bantu, Master of Prime, Life, Spirit, Matter and Forces.

Background: As a child, Najjda learned the ways of Bau-Hatt, the sun goddess who made crops prosper and healed the sick. When the turbaned killers came, she prayed to Bau-Hatt to spare her village. Those prayers went unheeded, and Najjda was taken as a slave to Port Royal, Jamaica. There, she served as a drudge, a tavern girl, then a housekeeper. One night, Bau-Hatt came to her and imbued her with the strength to blast her master's house to splinters. Since then, that power has grown, tended by the wise young woman Najjda has become.

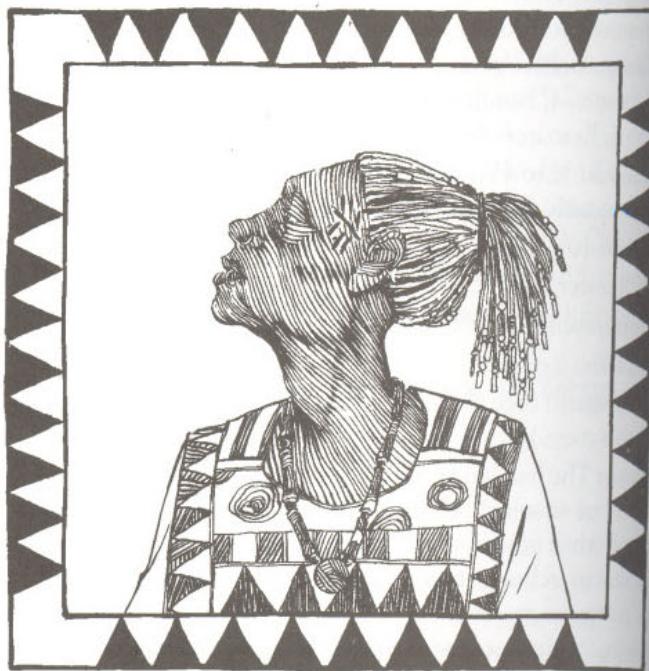
In time, she journeyed to Horizon, and quickly won a place assisting the former Celestial representative, Father deGama. She soon quit in disgust and later went on to help other slaves escape their masters. Despite her hard life, Najjda remained a caring and disciplined woman, rarely giving in to hate even under the worst conditions. Even so, she was, and remains, a capable warrior when circumstances demand war.

After the Ahl-i-Batin left the Council in the 1920s, Najjda's allies convinced her to return to Horizon. She has been a fixture on the Primii Council ever since, and won the seat itself after deGama's death in 1944. Over 300 years old, she retains her vigor and transforms into animals to watch over her chosen people. The turmoils in her central African homeland, however, have wounded her spirit. She has brought rain and purged sicknesses on more than one occasion, but realizes that her battle cannot be won alone.

Image: Najjda is a West African woman, roughly 5'3" and 140 lbs.. Though centuries old, she only seems 70 or so. She wears a lip ring, a red and white beaded necklace and matching bracelet, and her gray hair pulled back in tight, beaded braids. Her full-length white robe has been dyed with red geometric patterns, and her self-confident, confrontational manner hides a wealth of empathy for the suffering.

Roleplaying Hints: You have worked hard to see your people through, but have come to the realization that, alone, you are not enough. So you recruit others to help those suffering in Africa, not through warfare, but through Sleeper education, the introduction of new agricultural practices and the cultivation of an independent body of African businesses. You would support the educational reform proposal on the Council, except that it targets nations that are less needy than Africa. With Africa's difficulties over the last few decades, you have become increasingly discouraged, but you persevere because you know that you have to be the solid rock on which everyone else stands.

Quote: *You complain about the price of postage stamps? Try living without food or medicine like the Saharan Ushuri do, then complain to me about postage stamps.*





Marianna of Balador

Titles: Seat of Time (Cult of Ecstasy). Master of Correspondence, Life, Matter, Mind and Time. Oversees Balador, the supreme Cult of Ecstasy Chantry, and its surrounding Horizon Realm city of Altua, as well as Shivakti, the Ecstatic subrealm at Horizon.

Background: Born and Awakened in the early 1800s, Marianna still retains the vigor (and occasional silliness) of a teen-aged girl. That impression is deceiving: She's one of the most accomplished wizards of her age and a firm speaker for the Council. Although she holds many titles and responsibilities, Marianna finds time to view creation with wonder — and to enjoy herself immensely. Those who don't know her well can't understand how she accomplishes what she does, but the answer is simple: She has mastered time, distance and fatigue. Nothing can slow her down for long.

When the situation demands seriousness, Marianna's childish mask falls away, revealing a determined woman who has survived two centuries of war and horror, yet emerged unscathed. Her perpetual friendliness wins her a lot of respect in Concordia, yet she always manages to stay away from the political pitfalls her rivals construct. Her lust for life makes her a strong advocate of Sleepers, and she votes her with conscience, not for favors. Although many Tradition mages can call themselves her lovers, she has a special fondness for Dante, Laughing Eagle and the wandering Orphan called Hapsburg.

Image: Best known for her sexual appetites, Marianna is reputed to have been born in Venice, Italy. That heritage is impossible to detect from her looks; Marianna changes appearances so frequently that even her best friends seldom recognize her. Although she prefers classical ideals — Greek

statues, Botticelli nudes, Persian belly-dancers, etc. — Balador's mistress occasionally samples every mode of beauty.

Roleplaying Hints: Underneath a flitty demeanor, you're brilliant and savvy. As a matter of course, you keep all your senses attuned to what's going on, so your perceptions vary wildly; you may miss what someone says to your face as you watch electrical currents dance within the walls. Personal rights and freedoms are everything to you; the only thing that arouses your anger is watching an innocent suffer.

Quote: *I think it's a wonderful idea! Let's try it!*

Tom "Laughing Eagle" Smithson

Titles: Seat of Spirit (Dreamspeakers). Shaman Tom "Laughing Eagle" Smithson, Master of Spirit, Life and Time. Chief Elder, the Lodge of the Gray Squirrel in the Second World of the Diné. Chief Elder, Cult of the Bear cabal and Turtle Council House, the Dreamspeaker subrealm at Horizon.

Background: An Apache shaman during the Westward Expansion, Laughing Eagle was captured and sent to the Null-B Construct for slave labor in the mid-1800s. After his escape, he wandered the land, learning what he could and helping when he could. Later, he was instrumental in the creation of the Lodge of the Gray Squirrel, a Horizon Realm which preserves the old Native American ways. Although he secretly feels like a failure for being captured long ago, he accepted the Council post during the early 1990s, and maintains his position with integrity. Although he conducted a "secret" affair with Marianna several years ago, he appears unmoved by the passions of the flesh.

Laughing Eagle's coldness is a front, but a thick one. Most of those who meet him these days wonder about his inappropriate name, calling him "Tom" instead. In his



heyday, however, Smithson was cheerful and friendly. Even now, he has many friends, especially among the Changing Breeds. These aptitudes suited negotiation and trade over war, and didn't do him much good during his imprisonment, so he has cultivated warrior skills since his escape. Under it all, however, bits of Laughing Eagle still remain; people who get to know him well can get him joking with little effort. Casual acquaintances, however, often call him "Rigid Eagle" behind his back (offenders often find themselves on Marianna's bad side in a hurry).

However removed he may appear to be, this Master cares deeply for people of all races and views. His time in Null-B and his experiences during the Indian Wars showed him the face of suffering, and he hates it. His politics demonstrate his convictions: Smithson feels the days of the Grand Masters have passed, and that the Council must change and adapt to survive.

Image: A tall, rangy Plains Indian, Laughing Eagle favors plain Western-styled clothing and wears his black hair long in back. Although he appears 100 years younger than he actually is, his brown eyes betray his true age and emotions. Smithson is athletic and trains horses in his home Realm. Even while visiting the Council Chambers, he smells slightly of horse sweat and sage.

Roleplaying Hints: You have seen many faces come and go throughout the years. After a while, keeping a distance becomes essential for your sanity, especially with your current responsibilities. To you, the Council post is an opportunity to redeem yourself for letting your people down so many years ago, and you take it seriously. You still remain aware of the innate humor in life, but save the laughter for your many friends. With them, you can relax and tell bad jokes and tall tales like the seasoned storyteller you are.

Quote: *Once, I might have agreed that it is time to fight. Now, though, we should gather our forces and undermine our enemies' defenses rather than engage them head-on.*

Indrani Taktsang

Titles: Seat of Entropy (Euthanatos). The *Rimpoché* ("Precious Jewel") Indrani Taktsang ("Tiger's Nest"), Master of Entropy, Mind, Spirit and Correspondence. Lama, Jetsun (revered teacher) and Bhiksu (monk) of Phowa. Second Lama of the Great Wheel Marabout, Tibet, and Lama of Vajra, the Euthanatos subrealm at Horizon.

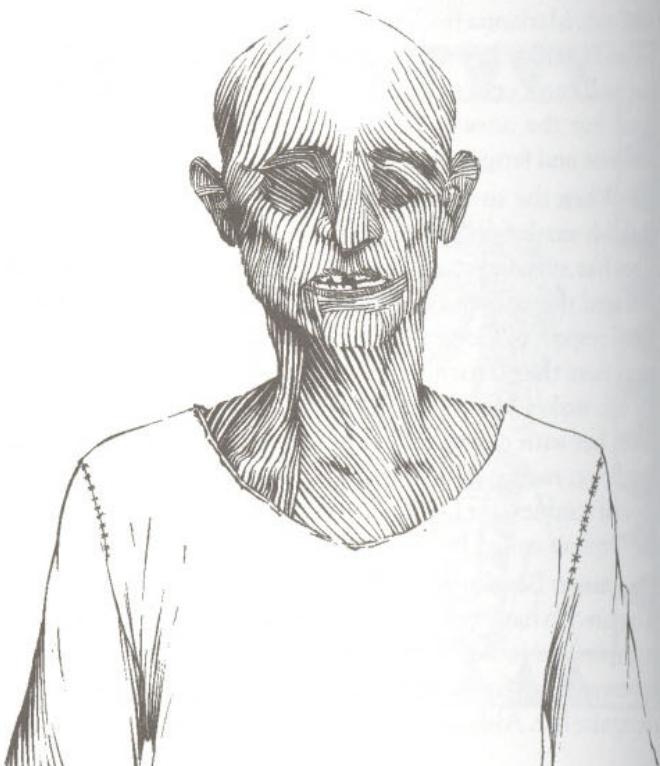
Background: Growing up among the Untouchables in India gave him some perspective on life: namely, "things die." Indrani Taktsang saw his fellows perish around him while he worked toting corpses up into the mountains for disposal. At eight, he had accepted death and impermanence; at 10, he Awakened as his father died in his arms, with a cadre of compassionate Euthanatos surrounding him.

Over the following years, Taktsang spearheaded the Euthanatos' effort to improve the Untouchables' lot, while

weeding out the worst of the undeserving castes above them. In the process, he became a teacher and a monk within the Euthanatoic Cult of Phowa (the ejection of consciousness at the moment of death). The renowned *bhiksus* at the Great Wheel Marabout, Tibet, followed his work and named him Second Lama in 1956. The following year, he was chosen to serve as Lama of Vajra, Horizon's Euthanatos subrealm. Over the next few years, he cultivated a secret personal friendship with Hyemyong S'unim, the Akashic Council Primus, reshaping Vajra to reflect the wisdom gleaned from Hyemyong's influence. Finally, in 1965, the Euthanatos Masters elected Taktsang to the Seat of Entropy.

Taktsang would like to believe in many of the proposals laid before him on the Council Table, but his innate cynicism takes over. The Ambassador Program, he feels, will not work because of the amount of effort, enlightenment and cooperation it requires; it would be nice to have a 10th Tradition, but the Hollow Ones do not have the requisite maturity; and educational reform sounds good on paper, but it risks more than it is worth. As disturbing reports about a corrupt Euthanatos subcult reach him, Taktsang shifts his alliances within the Tradition, learning what he can without exposing his investigation. If the other Traditions were to learn of the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy (see *The Book of Chantries*), it might mean inter-Council war... For now, Taktsang bides his time, working through the ancient Master Sennex to mask his true concerns.

Image: This Indian Master stands roughly five and a half feet tall; his shaved head, extremely bony build and stained and missing teeth make him look like an extremely weathered 40. He usually chalks face and limbs as a symbol



of his goal of spiritual Ascension, wears a thin white robe and insists on walking barefoot.

Roleplaying Hints: You strive to develop compassion within yourself, but it's a hard task: You've seen so much more suffering than most people have that you've become impatient and sarcastic with complainers. On the other hand, you're practical, flexible, grateful for the opportunities that brought you here and very appreciative of good humor, which is why Hyemy'ong is your best friend, though he's quite a bit older than you.

Quote: *Peace talks with the Akashics? Indeed, my friend, your wisdom serves you well.*

Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao

Titles: Seat of Forces (Order of Hermes). Archmage Getulio Vargas Sao Cristavao, Master of Forces, Matter, Entropy and Prime. Also First Master of the Bold Searchers cabal in Chantry Relampago (a small Chantry in Rio de Janeiro) and Master of Enochia bá Pymandre, Horizon's Hermetic subrealm.

Background: At 15, the university student Sao Cristavao, always fascinated with sailing vessels, stowed away on a slave ship headed to Brazil's sugar plantations. Upon arrival, he was captured by Frenchmen and sent north to work as a slave near a French-owned cannibal colony. Whipped, scorned, scurvy-ridden and spat-upon, Sao Cristavao's attitude toward life became permanently scarred.

A Portuguese raid saved him from his eventual fate in a cannibal's pot. Left gravely wounded, he Awakened as he crawled to the nearest sugar plantation, where his countrymen attended to him and, thinking him part of the raid, heaped praise on his valiant effort in the massacre. His story was blown so out of proportion that he soon found himself telling it to the king and queen back in Portugal, who bestowed upon him his own sugar plantation for the fiction that he, by now, almost believed himself.

Educated, Awakened and independently wealthy, Sao Cristavao was gradually inducted into the mysteries of the Hermetic Order by an acquaintance. His flaws made him an able student and a simple pawn. Noting his skill at certámen, several cabals within the Order set him up as a figurehead for their own covert interests, which included grooming the Council for eventual Hermetic leadership. By 1714, though still not a personable man, Sao Cristavao had freed the slaves on his plantation and was working for the abolition of slavery throughout the world, a cause he still pursues to this day.

This does not, however, make him an egalitarian man; it was Sao Cristavao who insulted an Iroquois delegation so badly that half of the Native American Dreamspeakers left the Council in 1756, and it was he who encouraged the Ahli-Batin to do the same by proclaiming "Once you had great promise, my brothers. But in an age brought about by your



peoples' own examples and arts, they themselves gather in filthy streets and stink of sheep dip and camels." This did not endear him to other Council representatives; his election in 1943 to the seat he now holds fanned outrage that has kept the Order out of favor—and out of plain sight—in Council politics since. Behind his annoying facade, Sao Cristavao's masters plot their takeover. If things go their way, the next meeting will be the Council's last....

Image: Sao Cristavao is a Portuguese man, roughly 5'6" and 125 lbs. Despite his 395 years, he seems like a battered 50. Mastery of the Arts has not healed his withered, bony face, misaligned nose and hunched back, nor the whip scars on his neck and hands. Perhaps his view of himself has set his image for life. Though a skinny, insignificant slip of a man, Sao Cristavao carries himself like royalty.

Roleplaying Hints: Your own harsh life has taught you to look for others' vulnerability—and to exploit it when necessary. Helping others transcend their weaknesses seems a worthy pursuit, so long as they respect your contributions. Suffering makes you uncomfortable—it reminds you of days you'd rather forget. Avoid it when possible. Keep people guessing by throwing out ambiguous facts that might obscure (or simplify) an issue, then undermine their position through a side attack (see **Chapter One**, Scene 6). Alone, you occasionally wonder what price you'll end up paying for your position. Your days of helplessness, however, are over for good. You swear it.

Quote: *A pity you do not have the education to see things from my perspective.*



Julian Spence

Titles: Seat of Matter (Sons of Ether). Dr. Julian Spence, Master of Matter, Mind and Forces. First Doctor of Horizon Laboratory, Horizon's Etherite subrealm. Also Editorial Board Member and Contributor to *Paradigma* and First Metaphysician of Ether, Great Hall Chantry and Gernsback Continuum.

Background: Julian Spence Awakened when he constructed an Etheric Biotransmodulator in his parents' apartment, causing their favorite ottoman to dematerialize, crash through three floors and splinter into pieces on the cellar steps. The Spences were convinced Julian had tossed it downstairs and to avoid having to discipline the young would-be genius, they promptly sent him off to be tutored by the (unknown to them) great Etherite Dr. Solomon Hale, then a member of the Conventions.

Since then, Dr. Julian Spence has won great acclaim among his colleagues for "finding" the Virtual Adepts and helping to usher them into the Traditions in 1961, as well as for his experiments on Matter fluctuation through the Realms. In a rush of enthusiasm, the Sons of Ether elected Spence to the Council as the authority in that Sphere, not realizing that, because of his shyness, Spence is much better off sitting on a lab bench than on a Seat of Matter. Sadly, he has never married, nor entered a serious relationship with a

woman. Thus, he cannot hope to understand them, and scratches his head in disbelief when they refuse to behave according to predictable patterns. Despite his shortcomings, however, Spence has proved a stabilizing force for the many visions at the Table, often inadvertently soothing over bruised egos with odd, unexpected statements or more practical solutions than those proposed by the visionaries.

Image: Dr. Spence is an eccentric Englishman, precisely 5'10" and 155 pounds. His apparent age 35; his real age is unknown. Spence wears his brown hair in an unkempt mass and he sports both a goatee and a mustache. He dresses anachronistically in Victorian manner, with dark velvet vests, jacket, crushed top hat, cane; in his lab, and wears a white captain's shirt, half-tucked into his pants and rolled up at the sleeves. At Council meetings, he appears distracted, often as if pulled out of an experiment.

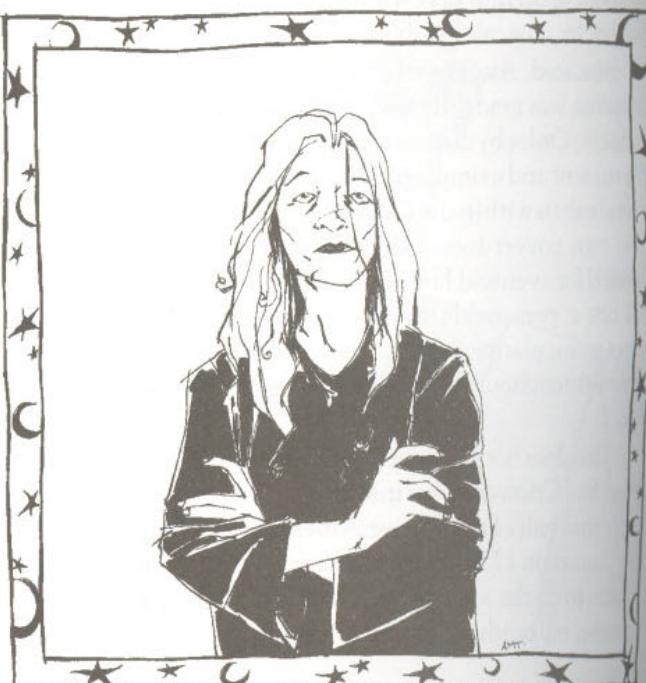
Roleplaying Hints: Your stiff, formal manner attempts to hide your social uneasiness. Since the 1800s, you have been conducting a self-study of opium's long-term effect on the brain. When wrenched away from an experiment long enough, you prove yourself to be a very compassionate and kind, if shy and impatient, person.

Quote: Yes, yes, bring back those data on Apollo's gravity band fluctuations immediately. What? Yes, yes, encapsulated Ether crystals will do.

Lady Charlotte Quay

Titles: Seat of Life (Verbena), Master of Life, Prime, Spirit, Forces and Mind. First Lady of the Seeking Moon and retired member of the Petals of the First Frost (still active cabal)

Background: Despite her potent Arts, Nightshade was dying. For over 500 years, she had battled, loved and schemed to keep the Council dream alive. Now the Verbena



Master, the last of the original nine Primi, was tired of life. At her feet, a host of elder witches waited to succeed her, from the ultra-traditional Gardeners of the Trees to the modern Moon-Seekers. Few of them, Nightshade noted, would maintain peace with the Hermetics and Celestials. What to do?

From the Shanandoah valley came a mixed cabal, the Petals of the First Frost, on an emissary mission to Concordia. Their resident healer, a young woman named Charlotte, made a powerful impression with her quick wit, enthusiasm and eloquence. The girl, fresh from her Awakening at the Woodstock festival, fascinated Nightshade. Although the elder never voiced her suspicions, it seemed as though the spirit of another young favorite, Eloine of the First Cabal, lived again in Charlotte. Eloine had lost her youth and innocence in an early Ascension conflict; Nightshade vowed that history would not repeat itself.

Charlotte herself was born in Toronto to a rich girl cast out by her family for conceiving a child out of wedlock. As Charlotte's mother immersed herself in the beatnik culture of coffee houses and cheap pot, she raised her girl to rebel. As a teenager, Charlotte followed her mother's example, ran away, moved into a commune with a guitarist from Brooklyn and went to Woodstock. The people she met there included her future cabal; at the end of the festival, she joined them in Virginia and pursued the witch's Arts. Several years later, she met her true mentor, Nightshade.

At first, she was sheltered; soon, however, the elder realized that her attentions stifled the girl's spark. Growing into her power, Charlotte was never far from Nightshade's side during the tumultuous '70s. As she rose in power and prominence, Lady Charlotte became known as "Nightshade's Voice," her favored pupil and chosen one. Until a new apprentice appeared, that is; Heasha Morningglade, 10 years Charlotte's junior, seized Nightshade's attentions in the early '80s, and it was she, not Lady Charlotte, who became the new favorite — and the elder's final heir.

Lady Charlotte, through hard work and personality, gained the Seat of Life shortly before Nightshade's death in 1988. Although Heasha has never seemed interested in the position, Charlotte waits for the day that she will change her mind. She does not intend to go quietly, however. Years of infighting and frustration, coupled with the enslavement of her children (see **Chapter One**), have darkened Lady Charlotte's former vigor, and her alliances and teachings have taken on a more militant edge. Should Heasha (or Porthos) decide to displace her, Lady Charlotte intends to give them the fight of their lives.

Image: The Verbena representative is a robust woman with long brown hair and a determined expression. Although mature, she radiates an air of authority far older than her years and an energy that few youths could match. In Concordia, she dresses in simple archaic robes and lets her

hair hang free. In her Realm or in the wilderness, she goes skyclad and unadorned.

Roleplaying Hints: Once, you were idealistic; now you know how hard it is to truly change the world. This difficulty doesn't stop you, but it's tiring and infuriating. In your sleep, you hear your children calling for you. Somehow, the nightmare seems familiar; it's maddening. Try as you will, it's impossible to really center yourself knowing your children's fate. You'll be damned, however, if that will deter you from your appointed post. You represent a fine lineage of mysticks, so act the part. Respect those who deserve it, offer kindness when you can, and crush your enemies utterly.

Quote: *Fate plays its tricks, but we are the true masters of our destinies.*

Roger Thackery

Titles: Seat of Correspondence (Virtual Adepts). The Elite Roger "Was Nematrode, Now Hacker" Thackery, Master of Correspondence, Matter, Time and Mind. (Latter title a private joke that mocks non-Adepts' ignorance of the term "elite.")

Background: A tinkerer with a strong interest in engineering, Thackery was practically born an Adept. In 1941, Thackery led the effort to involve the U.S. in the growing war and to subvert the Technocracy's commitment to the Axis. In 1959, acting on behalf of the Virtual Adepts, Thackery began talks with the Etherite Julian Spence regarding admission to the Traditions, and in 1961 he formally accepted the Council of Nine's invitation. As Adept spokesman, he was the natural choice for the Seat of Correspondence at the Table.



Thackery has had no trouble keeping current and even surpassing the latest Adept technology. Though the more disrespectful Adepts annoy him, he still appreciates their anarchistic spirit and tries to win them over instead of alienating them with "official" pronouncements. He appears occasionally at Crystal Palace, but spends most of his time hacking the Digital Web. Some say he's still looking for his friend Alan Turing, to retrieve him if he can. While he lives somewhere on the Web, he often visits Horizon via hologram, confounding the Servitors Principle with his ability to hack through their defenses. Even his appearances at the Council Table are by hologram. Accordingly, dust and mold covers the Adept subrealm Crashspace, as it hasn't been physically touched for over a decade.

Image: An English male, 6', 185 pounds, Thackery's actually 79, but looks about 45. He's a dashing fellow, with highly intelligent blue eyes and graying brown hair. A holdover from the old (IBM-style) school of Virtual Adepts, Thackery wears his hair cut short and dresses in comfortable suits and ties, with polished shoes and an ever-present briefcase.

Roleplaying Hints: You're quiet, cocky and self-assured, but have a strong interest in seeing every human being (and nonhuman) attain equality in the eyes of his/her/its fellows. You are a questioner, but, unlike other archmages, have an air of the ordinary about you that sets others at ease. Unfortunately, you also have a tendency to pull quiet pranks. For more hints, see also Chapter 1.0, *Virtual Adepts* Tradition book.

Quote: *The Telecommunications Bill? I hear Clinton signed it on a Wacom tablet. Wonder how long that company will be in business?...*

Other Characters

Visitors to the Council chambers will surely meet these two notables at some point. Consider them "Typical Consors" with many additional Abilities. If you have the Ascension's Right Hand supplement, assume that each of them has the Special Advantages offered under "Notes."

Master Archivist Nicodemus Mulhouse

Background: It was 1331 when Master Peperian of Criamon brought young Nicodemus to the Errabunda Covenant. The lad's talent for memory and organization aroused the wizard's interest, and he offered the boy's parents a magicked butter churn in exchange for his services. Nicodemus had never seen so many books, even at the Lord's manor. Shortly after his arrival to the Covenant, he reorganized the tomes and memorized the contents of each one.

By the time Errabunda fell to a Templar regiment in 1451, Mulhouse had acquired many of the skills within his

books. Although he never Awakened in the truest sense, his talents with the lesser arts enabled him to outlive a series of masters while gathering and cataloging a massive library. When his life's work went up in flames, Nicodemus wept and swore to preserve his next library, whatever the cost might be. Fortunately, his fame had extended throughout the Hermetic Order; the master archivist had no shortage of offers for his talents.

Master Baldric offered Mulhouse what he could not refuse: a job constructing the greatest magickal library ever seen, compiled from sources across the world. He set to work as the mortar between the Archives' stones dried and he has been at it ever since. The library he assembled is a true wonder, and he protects it and its contents with a father's zeal.

Horizon's residents joke that Mulhouse will never die; he has outlived the entire original Council and most of their rivals, sired a family that assists him with the Archives' upkeep and memorized more books than most librarians see in a lifetime. The past century has not been kind to Mulhouse; the technological advances and moral convolutions of the past 80 years irritate him, and his prolonged life has begun to wear down his body even in Horizon's rarefied atmosphere. He fears that the brainscan the Virtual Adepts performed on him several years ago (when they downloaded the Archives' organization and contents into a more accessible format) swept away part of his soul, and he distrusts the Virtual Adepts' "thigamogery." The modern "lack of good teaching" appalls him, too, and he rails against the rampant



illiteracy of the young. After the death of his last wife in 1879, Mulhouse became more withdrawn and cantankerous. To many of his descendants, the books are his real family. Although he has managed to avoid the Traditions' political upheavals, the Grand Archivist is not above playing favorites when it comes to library access. Getting on his good side, as difficult as it may be, is often the only way to locate the rarest and most valuable tomes. On bad days (which have become more frequent with each passing year), he might ban a person from entering the Archives at all if he feels he's been treated with disrespect.

Regardless of his flaws, Mulhouse is, in many ways, the heart of the Archives. The walls themselves seem to sigh when he's in a bad mood, and the endless stacks seem to glow when he's happy. For those with the patience to listen (a task not unlike searching for a book in the card catalog), the old man is full of tales from the Council's history... and his family's history... and his former masters' histories... and so on.

Image: A bent and arthritic old man with an Old English brogue and an all-seeing eye, Mulhouse still dresses like a medieval scribe and wears sandals even in the dead of winter. Within his library, he seems to know everything that's going on. His last hairs left him sometime around 1700, and the last 150 years have taken the spring out of his step. Still, for a man almost 700 years old, Nicodemus seems pretty spry.

Roleplaying Hints: All things pass. All things outside your Archives, that is. You've cast enchantments that preserve your sacred charges from the ravages of age. Pity they do not work so well on you. With encroaching blindness, arthritis, heart trouble and incontinence, you'd almost rather die. Still, someone has to look after your books. Until your mind flees completely, no one better exists. Outside the library, you're still inside, preoccupied and short-tempered. Your memory of the old days is as sharp as ever, and that's a nasty blade when you think too much of your youth and old loves.

Notes: In addition to five or six dots in all Knowledge Traits, Nicodemus has many Merits (Eidetic Memory, Concentration and all kinds of Ties) and Flaws (Lame, Compulsion, Intolerance for Familiars, Driving Goal, Age and Absent-Minded) and Hedge Magic Numina (Conjuration 3, Cursing 2, Healing 3, Herbalism/Brewing 5, Summoning 2). Anyone who threatens Mulhouse will have more trouble than he ever dreamed possible.

Quote: *Something to read? Humf! There is always something to read, young lad.*

Zvolen Lucenik

Background: Fortunately for young Zvolen, the Tzimisce who took him into... service... was less cruel than most. He only warped the lad into a blob of writhing protoplasm when the boy actually made some mistake, not merely on general principle. Still, the nine decades Lucenik spent with the vampire were hell on earth. They made him



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powerful, though; by the time Janos Sturvik rescued him, he'd worked his way into his master's confidence and had been granted several inhuman talents. Still, the things he witnessed (and, it's said, took part in) killed a vital part of his soul. Although Horizon's Majordomo is efficient, classy and exceedingly polite, he inflicts casual cruelties upon any suspected intruder. Although his worst punishments have gone unnoticed, he has been relieved of his post several times for mentally and physically torturing unannounced visitors.

To those who have observed the proper formalities, Lucenik is charming in an Old World way. He's a fabulous and witty conversationalist, formal without being stuffy and polite without being overbearing. He manages the Council Chambers' considerable staff with precision and even kindness. He feels eternally indebted to the Masters of Horizon for saving him, and does whatever they require — from passing a note to assassinating an ambassador — without question or hesitation. Anyone who threatens the Council or its members is, to him, less than an insect. And, as a Tzimisce ghoul knows well, there are many unpleasant ways to deal with insects....

Out of the public eye, Lucenik has a lover, a steward named Rollo Benn. Both of them have had similar nightmares of slavery to inhuman masters. Rollo had been locked in an Astral hell, a tiny underground box, for spilling a drink on the floor of the Aeon Abbon Ta. After his own rescue, Rollo went into service as a guardsman. Few residents, even the Masters, know of their Majordomo's relationship with a guard. Fewer than Lucenik thinks would care, but he keeps it quiet all the same. His other great secret involves the knowledge that his former master imprinted on his brain during his days in Transylvania. Although he never speaks

of it, the Majordomo dreads the day his vampiric master comes to retrieve him. Lucenik knows all too well what atrocities the Tzimisce would commit were he to succeed....

Image: This burly official dresses perfectly in a tailored blue uniform and he has impeccable manners. His bloodshot blue eyes appraise visitors with unsettling insight, and his hooked nose and bald head resemble the features of a hungry vulture. Lucenik appears to be in his mid-60s, but is far older. His lingering accent lends authority and threat to his words, no matter how innocent they may be.

Roleplaying Hints: You have learned the lessons of precision and disobedience all too well. No one — except, of course, spies and traitors — should suffer as you have. Those who would disrupt this magickal dream, however, must learn a catechism of pain. If circumstances demand, you may call upon your old master's legacy to impress or injure your foes, but you would rather use politesse (and, if necessary, treachery) to disarm them. When things go well, rejoice. If not, correct the problem. By any means required.

Notes: In addition to five dots in Chantry Politics, Intrigue and Etiquette, Lucenik has a variety of useful skills (including Interrogation and Torture 4), as well as vampiric Disciplines (Potence 3, Fortitude 3, Presence 3) and many consor, mage and Bygone allies.

Quote: *I understand you have a message to deliver to Lord Halifax, bani Sons of Ether, Master of Matter, Forces and Time. It is important, yes? Good. I would hate to disturb him if it were not.*

Guardians

Watching Horizon's front doors are four extremely powerful guardians, three of whom watch the Realm's portals, and the fourth (Gáothghlas-Alainn) who guards the Umbral Ways between the portals and Horizon. Other more common creatures wander the mountains and plains. The first creature here, Desidious Mevara, is a spirit; the rest are material Bygones, unique creatures rescued from Earth's Paradox Effect.

Desidious Mevara

Willpower 8, Rage 8, Gnosis 8, Power 70

Charms: Armor (10 points or more), Blast Earth (causes the ground to erupt and strike victims; inflicts 7 dice of damage at two Power per die), Cleanse the Blight, Imprisoning Earth (traps intruders with the equivalent of a Strength 10 grapple; affects a 15' radius circle and uses 10 power), Materialize, Reform, Tracking

Materialized Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 4, Stealth 5, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4, Lore (Traditions 4; Technocracy 2; Garou 2)

Materialized Health Levels: OK (x 6), -1 (x 3), -2 (x 3), -5, dispelled

Innate Countermagick: 5 dice



Image: A near-invisible being that shapes the ground itself into caricatures of its victims' faces. This spirit speaks in a whisper like scraping stones in a windstorm.

A slothful elemental Umbrood with powerful earth magicks, Desidious Mevara serves Porthos and Horizon out of fear of the Hermetic mage. The spirit contents itself with spying upon those who venture out into the hills where its home lies. Hence, it can become a good source of information for those who know how to approach it (Hint: Respect is good, strength is better and fear is counterproductive). Desidious Mevara is not terribly intelligent, but has strong will and an innate countermagick beyond its immunity to Life and Matter Effects.

The Izizyii

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 5, Stealth 6

Spheres: N/A

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK (x 7), dispelled

Armor Rating: 4

Attacks/Powers: 2 automatic aggravated Health Levels' worth of physical damage to anyone within a 20' cloud (see below; given time, the Izizyii can bore through any material structure. The harder the material, the longer this takes. A tree may be demolished in three or four turns, a stone wall in an hour and a steel plate in three hours or so.)

Image: One example of the strange forms of life possible in the Umbra, the Izizyii are a hive-mind symbiosis of Umbrood and tiny parasites found only in the most desolate wastes of the Shade Realm of Matter. The Izizyii, one of the most feared guardians of Horizon, communicates via a buzzing form of telepathy. Composed of microscopic parasites, this hive-body is almost invisible; the most its victims will see before an attack is a vague, amorphous shape seemingly composed of billions of virus-sized particles. Because of its nature, the Izizyii can enter through the tiniest crevices, invade bodies through orifices and evade many forms of physical attack. No defense short of a force field or fire garment will keep an intruder from harm. Even sealed suits only delay the guardian for a turn or two. The Umbrood that controls the hive-body is keenly intelligent and seems to have a great handle on offensive tactics.

Kakraw

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 6, Intimidation 5, Stealth 4, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3, Lore (Traditions) 3

Spheres: N/A

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK (x 4), -1 (x 4), -2 (x 3), -4, Incap.

Armor Rating: 5

Attacks/Powers: Claws, bite (7 dice); poison touch (like Dim Mak Entropy Effect, Arete 4. One Health Level for each success, at a rate of one/turn); mystick sight (all Spheres, first rank sensory Effects only); flight (15 yards/turn); regeneration (1 Health Level/turn); telepathy (as the Mind Effect, Arete 4); Blighted Touch and Short Out (as per the spirit Charms; rolls 5 dice for results.)

Image: Appearing as a giant shadowy raven or vulture, Kakraw haunts the cemetery and the tumulus at Lachesis Portal. Sometimes she speaks in a cracked, weary voice, but for the most part she simply watches for those "whose time has come." Although she has the most personality of all the guardians, Kakraw seems to prefer her own company; she's often cantankerous, sarcastic and impatient. She seems fond of some Verbena and Euthanatos, especially older mages, but rails against Technomancers of all kinds: "You'll see, ye bright and shiny Icari! All the best that ye may beget falls to ruin sure enough!"





Gàothglas-Alainn

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Charisma 6, Manipulation 4, Appearance 6, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Dance 2, Singing 3, Survival 4, Cosmology 4, Linguistics 5, Lore (Traditions 4, Technocracy 2, Garou 3, Spirit 3, Marauders 3)

Spheres: N/A

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK (x 4), -1 (x 4), -2 (x 2), -3, -5, Incap.

Armor Rating: 4

Attacks/Powers: Trample (9 dice); flight (30 yards/turn); healing or harming (as Life magick, Arete 6); Songs of Future Days, Accelerate/Slow Time (as the Time Effects, Arete 6); shapechange (into any human form); Call Lightning (as the Forces Effect, Arete 6); Telepathy (as the Mind Effect, Arete 6)

Innate Countermagick: 4 dice

Image: The Verbena Nightshade saved this Celtic guardian from extinction when the Mythic Age expired. A creature of fable, Gàothglas-Alainn, whose name means "Beautiful Green Wind," appears as a jade Pegasus seemingly made of liquid glass. Though dedicated to protecting Horizon just as Nightshade protected her, the Pegasus insists on being called by her full name and will not allow anyone other than Lady Quay to ride her.

Occasionally, this curious guardian assumes human form and travels the Realm with suspicious or intriguing newcomers. Those she suspects will be monitored, but those who catch her fancy may be joined for a short time by an inquisitive yet friendly stranger. Though she speaks fluent English, French, German, Latin, Mandarin and Gaelic, her accent marks her Celtic origins. Though she's been known to adopt the guise of a wandering boy or brawny Irish brawler (occasionally named Fionn), she prefers to go by her own name and travel as a beautiful Irish maiden dressed in flowing robes. However she appears, the guardian goes barefoot and always wears green. Her magical powers, including flight, carry over into every guise she assumes.

Ogre

Originally descended from a host of Earthly species, the most common of several Horizon ogre types has evolved since the Realm's creation. Although they appear stupid by human standards, these Bygones have developed a sensitivity beyond any mortal creature's range. Most ogres run in packs of between three and 16, living tribal lifestyles in caves within the mountain ranges. Females dominate ogre society, much to the surprise of some of the Council's more traditional naturalists, and children are well-spoiled until they reach half-maturity (usually around 10 years old), whereupon they're driven out of the cave to forage for themselves. This abrupt change may explain their violent temperament.

Although some brave mages have trained ogres to work as sedan-carriers or guards, most wise ones avoid contract with the brutes altogether. Ogres are omnivorous, but prefer



deer or bison meat. No one has ever proven ogres to be man-eaters, but the tales persist anyway. They do tend to bite their enemies, but usually cast human targets aside after they die. Some advanced ogres use crude weapons, but most simply throw boulders or attack hand-to-hand. Although some communities have reported ogre raids, the creatures seem to prefer solitude to war.

Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intuition 4, Intimidation 5, Melee 2, Hunting 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Tracking 5, Traps 2, Enigmas 4

Spheres: N/A

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK (x 3), -1 (x 3), -2, -3, -5, Incap.

Armor Rating: 2

Attacks/Powers: Bite (11 dice); hurled rocks (8 to 15 dice); mystic sight (rank 1 Life and Prime perceptions, Arete 3)

Unicorn

Forget what you think you know; Horizon unicorns are the real thing as they once existed on Earth — proud, multicolored and aggressive. While magickal by nature, attuned to mystic energies and fairly intelligent, real unicorns are a far cry from the New Age paragons immortalized in cheesy poster artwork. Perhaps by the time these specimens were carried over into the Realm, their initial purity had already been lost. Even so, a herd of unicorns running across the open plains is a glorious sight.

Unicorns gather into herds of a dozen or so, usually under the guidance of a dominant stallion, who drives out all contenders. Their whickering communication works for simple expressions and commands, but falls pretty short of the traditional telepathy. Mages who have established mental links with the creatures consider them imaginative and reasonable, but no wiser or complex than a 10-year-old child. Their senses are excellent, however, and most seem to have a sharp empathy for another being's true nature. The traditional views are right in this regard, at least — evil-intentioned intruders are driven away with lethal force, while kind or friendly strangers are welcomed by the herd.

Occasionally, an unusual unicorn develops reasoning and communication skills beyond its peers. Many of these individuals soon lead their own herds or leave out of boredom and accompany humans back to their own communities. The latter make excellent, if temperamental, companions.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 1 to 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics (running & jumping) 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Intuition 3, Sense Deception 4, Survival 3, Swimming 1, Tracking 4

Spheres: N/A

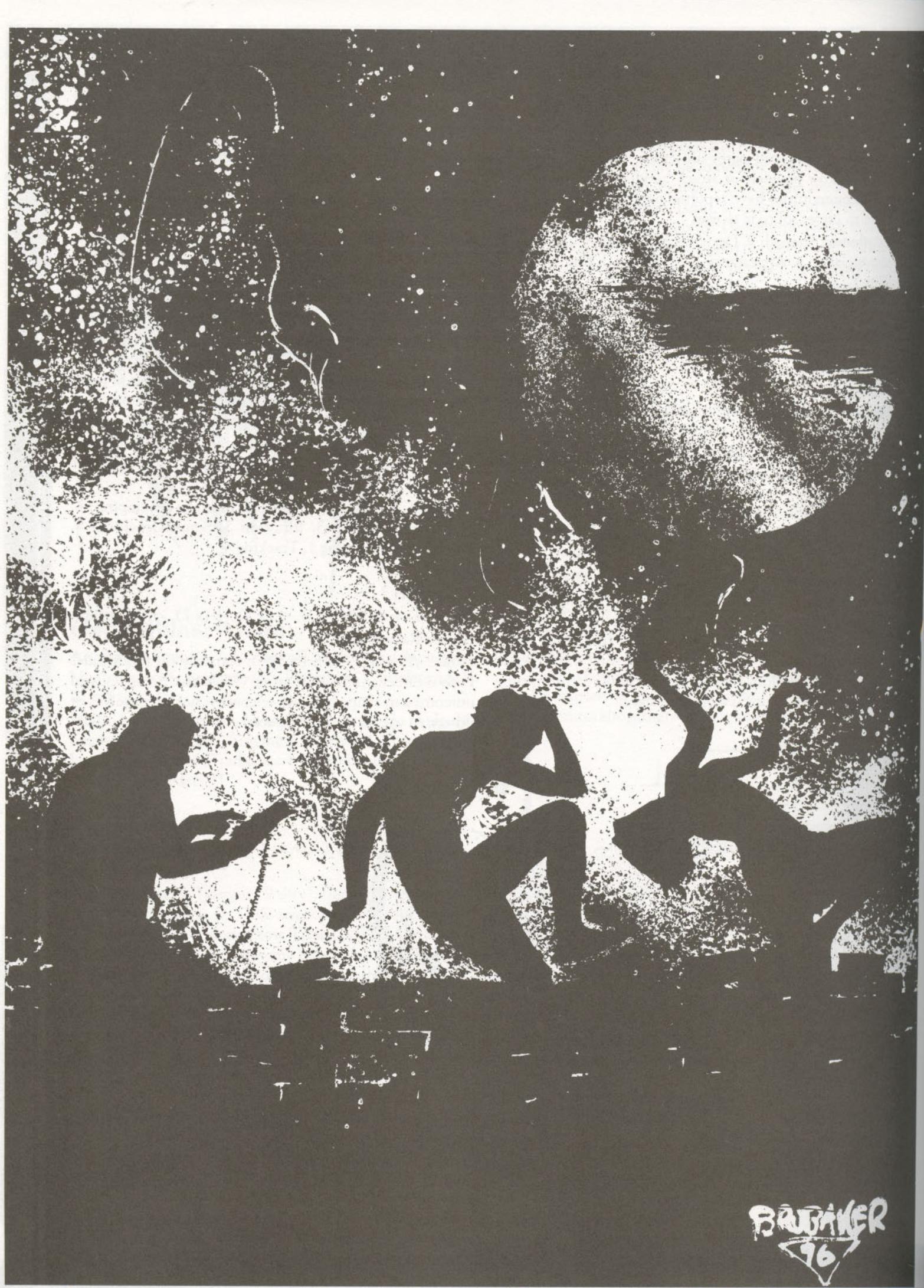
Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK (x 3), -1 (x 2), -2 (x 2), -3, -5, Incap.

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Horn (8 dice); empathy (as the Mind 1 Pathos Effect, Arete 4); running (35"/turn). Some unusual unicorns can shapeshift, use telepathy, heal themselves or others, or use many other Special Advantages.





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Appendix: The Weight of Centuries

*"How am I? Senile of course," the shriveled antique said.
"A few days ago I had a long conversation with my eldest
grandson, and I was wondering how he'd suddenly grown so
intelligent when I realized he's been dead for twenty years and I
was talking to the parrot."*

— Barry Hughart, *Eight Skilled Gentlemen*



Think back to where you were five years ago. Think about how the world was different then, and how much has changed since. Maybe you missed some of the significant shifts, and only found out about them later. Now try 10 years. A whole other decade. A lot of people had completely different value systems at the time, right? Sure. Odds are, there have been some really significant changes in your lifetime already (the collapse of the Soviet Union springs to mind).

Now imagine living through three centuries of such changes.

Countries rise and fall. Cultural mores change like a chameleon on acid. Once-virgin wilderness hosts stripmalls

and burger joints. Maybe the log cabin you were born in is long-buried under the parking lot of a pager-manufacturing company. Sure, you've been living through it all, but seriously, every once in a while you've just got to look back and wonder: *What the hell happened?*

The scary thing is, mages can't afford to sit on the front porch and complain about how they miss the "good old days." They're in a war to change reality for (they hope) the better, and that means they've got to keep adapting, keep evolving. Learn how to use those new weapons, fast. Mutate or stagnate, kids.

And after a few centuries of this strain, it's possible that something's going to give.

The Press of Time



"So, how many people have been around since the First Cabal, and can I play one of them?"

Ouch. What a question.

But it's an interesting one.

There are, of course, a few very old mages still running around the World of Darkness. Like the ancient vampires who dominate the cities, these mysticks have clung to existence for far longer than nature intended them to. And let's face it, they're *interesting*.

One of the main points of *Mage* is that the form magick takes has a lot to do with the culture that its wielders spring from. The Virtual Adepts are the obvious example, but there are countless others. It would logically follow that an elder mage would look at magick quite differently than the young hotshots of the modern age. Then again, maybe not. Maybe his perceptions changed with the years (although this is very rare). The possibilities seem even more endless (if possible) in a game involving the ancient ones.

And yet, there aren't that many ancient mages. If it were easy to grab immortality, everybody would be doing it, right? Obviously, something's in the way.

This Appendix is intended to take a close look at the eldest mages — giving advice for roleplaying them and explaining systems that represent the difficulties inherent in eternal life. It's primarily an aid for the Storyteller, one who should give a little more insight into the minds of the *truly* old. If the Storyteller allows, it's also possible to use this as a guideline for a chronicle in which the player characters themselves are centuries old. The key word here is "guidelines." Firm decisions are best left to the Storyteller, who has a better feel for the power level he wants floating around his game.

First and foremost, we don't recommend that you allow ancient player characters just to up the power level of a game. It's fine to enjoy a "bigger guns" chronicle, but roleplaying the "ancient, powerful and deadly ones" of *Mage* is a lot more challenging than taking your average character and adding a lot of dots to the character sheet. Playing a centuries-old

character entails thinking about what they would have been like growing up, how they reacted to the cultures they interacted with over time and how they've dealt with (or will deal with) the amount of change that goes on even in a lifetime.

Thinking Like an Immortal

Playing a person who has seen centuries pass is actually a little trickier than one might think. Some motifs are easy enough to explore — the loved ones who died of old age, the insanity of the modern age compared to the "good old days" — but making an immortal truly vivid requires deeper probes into his psyche.

How would someone born during the French Revolution look at the world today? More importantly, how would an enlightened human being, with those centuries of experience, view her surroundings? The key to the greatest magicks involves abandoning your limitations, but what limitations present themselves with the passing of years?

Motivation

First and foremost, why live so long? Nobody really wants to get old, true, but there are a lot of dangers involved in immortality. For one, Paradox hates an immortal just as much as it hates a perpetual motion machine. You're also going to outlive your loved ones (assuming, of course, that you have any). If anyone's going to notice the distinct lack of your passing, the Technocracy will. And the stress on your mind might, just might, push you into Marauderhood within a century or so. Think for a minute about your character. What would make her risk everything if she believes her Avatar will survive anyway? Besides, so few mages live to be old, rotes or not....

Any character must have a motive for her actions. We've offered a few possible ones for immortality below. Although by no means comprehensive, they provide some seed ideas with more intensity than "I never want to get wrinkled." The motive should typically be something very central to who the character is, a desire so strong it compels them to set aside their human life and risk losing everything to Paradox.

Disclaimer in a Box

Before we begin the hows and wheres, a quick word of caution: Be careful how you use this Appendix. There aren't that many ancient mages left in the world, and precious few of them are as stable as Senex or Porthos. That said, you have perfect reason not to let your players fool around with Forces 6, no matter how much they whine. Game balance can be twisted around just as easily as World of Darkness reality by these mystick powerhouses, and your players (with their big ol' Quiets) have an excuse to be really irrational while they do it. You also have official dispensation to tell them "No, you *can't* attain Forces 6 in a mortal lifetime, no matter how many experience points you spend." Those few who wield such godlike powers spend lifetimes learning them. We also grant you total leeway to deny archmage status to players who cannot meet the roleplaying challenges outlined below. Many power-mongers will simply act dangerously eccentric, then excuse their actions as "the ravages of time." Don't let such players near archmage player-characters.

The choice is yours. You have been warned.

(The horrible Underworld of Wraith: The Oblivion could provide all kinds of motivation for wanting to live forever. Of course, wraiths get themselves into that situation by hanging on to mortality past their time, but the mages don't know that....)

- **Fear:** It's not a very enlightened outlook, but some mages are terrified of losing control of their bodies, much less their minds. After all, there's no guarantee that your next life isn't going to be more horribly worse off than the one you already have.

- **Bloody-Mindedness:** Maybe you're not even close to accomplishing what you want to do, and you have very long-range plans indeed. If you want something done right, you'd better make sure you're around to do it yourself....

- **Lust for Life:** How can anyone peacefully move on without experiencing everything the world has to offer? There's a lot to see and do, and you might miss something between now and your next Awakening (assuming you *have* a next Awakening....).

- **Hatred:** Maybe you've vowed to spit on an enemy's grave. Unless he's a vampire, one good way to do that is to simply outlive him. (Not that most mages would be satisfied with waiting until a foe kicks off, but eternal youth gives you more time to work.)

- **Gift:** Immortality may not be your own idea. An outside power may have given you eternal life out of friendship... or spite....

- **Love:** Nobody ever said love was fair. You may have fallen deeply in love, only to find that your paramour is immortal (Another mage? A vampire? Something else entirely?). And you'll be damned if you'll let something like death separate you....

- **Quest for Perfection:** Many believe that true harmony can only come from many incarnations, but others (including most Akashic Brothers) seek to attain perfection in their lifetimes. If you are given the time, you can perfect body and soul without having to start anew in your next life.

- **The End Times:** Since ancient Egypt, people have always believed that the world was about to end. As civilization after civilization crashes, burns and gutters out, the idea becomes a lot easier to swallow. If you die of old age, there might not be a world left to come back to — and what if you could have *prevented* Armageddon?

- **What Reincarnation?:** This whole reincarnation thing could be a lie, you know. If one shot is all you get, you might as well hang on as long as you can. Oblivion might not be all it's cracked up to be, after all.

- **Powerlust:** Another emotion that owes little to enlightenment, the craving for power can overwhelm all other considerations. Look at what the Nephandi have traded for theirs. Thankfully, few power-mad mages survive long enough to become immortal, unless they're very, very good.

- **Ascension:** It's so close you can smell it. Perhaps if you hang on for just a few decades more, the ultimate enlightenment will finally be yours.

Fleeting Passion

It is unfortunately true that most centuries-old mages simply don't maintain romantic relationships. The reasons are numerous. For one, the passing of years can often make a person bitter and cynical, as even mortals know. Mages are a little arrogant to start with, and as your knowledge increases, it becomes easier to prejudge someone within the first few minutes of meeting them. ("Oh, he reminds me of that Prussian captain; I imagine he's just as stuck on himself." "Poor child, she's so naive. She might be interesting when she really knows what's going on, but I haven't the time....") Of course, some mages grow more tolerant with the years, learning to accept people more readily. Enlightenment can counteract the reflex-action of cynicism, but it's not the only concern.

There's also the "spark" to consider. Even Cultists of Ecstasy get jaded, and passing years help build up an immunity to the hormones. Yes, a little Life or Mind magick can increase the hormonal rush until it feels like first love again... but that's hardly spontaneous. Think of the sexual pull like spicy food; the older a person gets, the spicier she likes her food, because food just doesn't taste the same anymore. The taste buds die. This, too, can be overcome; however, most older mages don't see it as a priority.

Finally, there's the problem of compatibility. Normals are pretty much off limits for any real length of time, for the obvious reasons. Other mages? Well, mages are a stubborn, somewhat egocentric lot. They have to be. The only lasting relationships between mages happen when the couple happen to have very compatible outlooks on life, love and the Ascension War, which is rare. Werewolves and changelings (if the mage knows about them) have mortal lifespans and even more diverse outlooks. Vampires and wraiths are effectively immortal, but are also very alien. (Woe to the hapless mage whose opinions of vampires have been shaped by Anne Rice....)

All told, it may seem that we're telling you that romantic subplots are impossible for ancient mages — quite the contrary. Like any human relationships, there are simply stumbling blocks to overcome, and mages of great age have it a bit harder than everyone else. Just remember that to stir an ancient's heart, it would have to be somebody *really* special... epic, almost.

Accomplishments

Immortality's a laugh. You show me a mage powerful enough to live 300 years and I'll show you a schmuck powerful enough to achieve any sane person's goals in your average loser's lifetime.

— Tommy Dragonjaws, Akashic Brother

Apathy kills. It's even worse when you have scores of rivals and enemies slavering at your throat. After all, if you suddenly decide there's really no point to getting up in the morning, someone's sure to be charitable enough to make sure you never have to again. So it's a given that there are still things that any mage worth the title wants to get done.

But another thing to consider is the possibility that an ancient has already achieved several goals over the years, or failed at tasks she'll never get another chance to try again. What were they? And how did these successes or failures shape her?

This is a chance to explore what it meant to be involved in the Ascension War through different time periods (see

the Prelude of Mage Second Edition for an excellent example of such transitions). Almanacs, history texts and especially timelines can all be helpful here. Although it would probably be taking it a bit too far to say, "Janet's assistance won the Civil War" or "If only Lord Henry hadn't failed to kill Hitler in 1936," there's no reason the elder's deeds can't have had something to do with historical events.

The How-To of Eternal Life



So how do you get to be immortal, anyway? Well, plenty of rotes exist for just such a purpose, all of which have been sought out by mortal and mage alike. Technomancers often clone themselves, then shift their consciousness from body to body to avoid the aging process. There are also rumors of mythic places, as-yet-undiscovered Fountains of Youth where one receives the finely tuned Tass that makes the years fall away. It's generally held, though, that all proper methods involve some Time magick, plenty of Life, a helping of Prime (to keep pouring energy into what might be a continually running Effect) and a fair amount of Entropy. Most mages prefer to do one dangerous ritual every decade or so and age normally until the next one's due. These rituals are best performed in the safety of a Horizon Realm — having Paradox interfere with this process is something nobody — but nobody — wants.

Paradox

Very old mages accumulate Paradox just by being alive. Long life is plausible for just so long before the universe starts catching on. Generally speaking, a mage on Earth accumulates one permanent Paradox point for every 50 years he lives past the first 150. Such problems rarely bother archmages in Horizon Realms, which is precisely why ancient mages spend their time there — this increase only applies on Earth. Setting one's foot back on home turf would likely prove messily fatal. No, Porthos doesn't leave Doissetep all that often.

Senility

Presumably, whatever process the mage is using to keep herself immortal prevents the brain from deteriorating. (Roark McHenry of the Verbena missed this very detail when he devised his infamous **Years of the Oak** rote. Some time later, he went Marauder for about two weeks before being gunned down.) Senility, as we know it, isn't a concern for the properly prepared mage. However, centuries of experience is quite a bit to store in your memory, particularly if you haven't mastered Mind magick yet.

Generally speaking, unless a mystick takes certain drastic steps (such as surgically removing all "unnecessary" memories or accessing a greater percentage of her brain), she becomes more and more susceptible to Quiet. Obviously,

this becomes harder to resist as her Paradox Pool grows. This magickal insanity is the most common backlash an elder mage receives.

Resonance

When a willworker becomes truly powerful, his actions begin to have powerful results on his surroundings, whether he wills it or not. Archmages indirectly influence their environments in hundreds of small ways. It becomes no longer a question of what the ancient directly effects, but how far the ripples from his deeds can reach. He becomes the proverbial butterfly whose wings stir up hurricanes continents away — only much more so. (See Mage Second Edition, Chapters Four and Nine, and The Book of Chantries, p. 139.)

Rotes of Immortality

Caveat magus: These are by no means the only tested rotes that can slow or reverse aging. Nor are they necessarily perfect: After all, any system sustained for too long is likely to deteriorate. However, these rotes have been grudgingly shared by allies for many centuries, and have proven more effective than most. They are more-or-less universal; the foci and ritual methods may change from faction to faction, but the systems remain the same. Feel free to introduce them with whatever name or methodology the teacher would have preferred.

Shed the Years (••••• Prime, •••• Entropy, ••• Life, •• Mind, •• Time)

This is a "maintenance" rote, one preferred by mysticks who don't like to bother with constant magics at play on their physical person. Some Verbena brew potions of youth; Sons of Ether boast of their Phoenix Engines. Whatever the outward trappings, this rote will transform the mage's body into the state it was in nine years ago, effectively giving her almost another decade of life. Most mysticks who are using this rote tend to perform it in a Horizon Realm, since the Paradox backlash could be intense indeed.

[This Effect requires five successes, and the difficulty is appropriately frightening. The pomp and circumstance of high ritual usually aids the process, as does the presence of plentiful and readily available Tass. The mage temporarily halts Entropy while using Life magick to rejuvenate her

body. The Time Sphere helps the mage sense what she was like (not what she thinks she was like) nine years back, and the Mind Sphere helps her mentally adjust to the “resetting” of her brain without losing the memories of the last nine years. Finally, the adept must be a master of Prime to fuel such an incredible regression to a younger, stronger state. Once the rote is completed, the willworker ages normally.]

Serenity of the Stone (••••• Prime, ••••• Time, •••• Entropy, ••• Life, ••• Mind)

This rote, a favorite of the Akashic Brotherhood, slows the aging process so drastically that the mage doesn't seem to age at all. Once performed, the mystick need not recast the rote time and again.

[This rote can seem coincidental if the mystick secludes himself from regular contact with Sleepers. He uses his Mastery of Prime to create a mostly self-maintaining energy pattern that fuels the mutual slowing of Time and Entropy. Life and Mind magick help keep his faculties, both physical and mental, in proper working order.

[The downside is that the mage is still a thaumivore of sorts, and must periodically refresh the Prime pattern running the rote. Since this rote is more effective than most, the mage need only “consume” about, say, a point of Quintessence every week or so. If Quintessence isn't available, the mystick takes a Health Level of damage per day, and begins aging a little more rapidly. In some cases, Paradox has been known to hit willworkers at this delicate stage, rapidly withering them even beyond their chronological age. The precise reason for this is unknown, although the Chorus theorizes that the irregular ebb and flow of energy is an affront to the Divinity.

[This rote cannot stop aging, merely slow it to a crawl. The mage typically ages one year for every 50.]

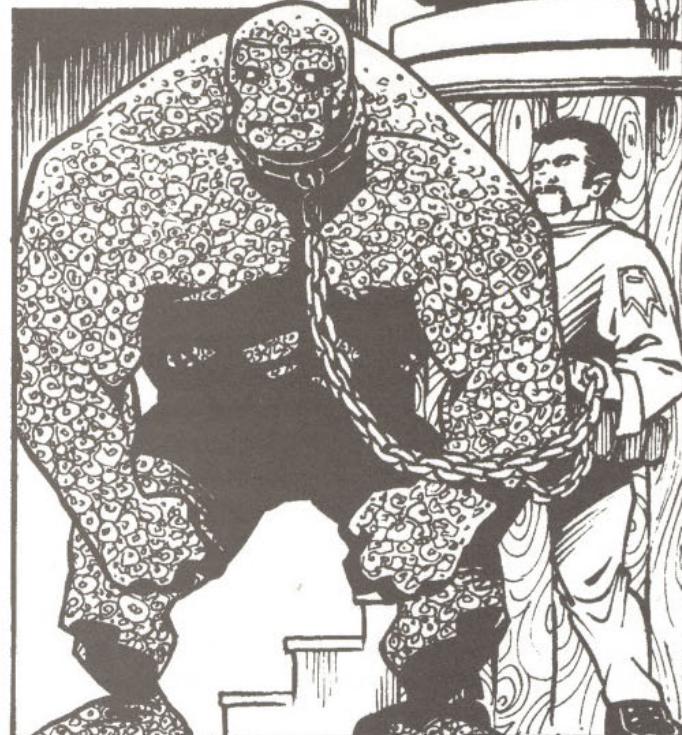
Ancient Character Creation

If the troupe is willing, Storytellers may opt to run a chronicle in which the players are allowed to play venerable mages. This style of gaming can easily get out of hand, but can also lead to fascinating roleplaying. Obviously, the tone of the game will become more epic than your average Mage game (which is saying something in many cases). The following guidelines help you create an elder from scratch:

Oracles

In case it needs to be said, we very strongly advise against Oracle player characters. These most legendary archmages are only *rumored* to exist; many modern wizards consider the Oracles a myth, nothing more. Even the archmagi have their doubts. If they do exist, these ultramages don't concern themselves with mortal affairs — no Oracle ended World War II, saved the White Howler

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werewolves or wished away the Technocrats, so we can assume they leave humanity to struggle on as it will.

The average roleplayer will have a hard enough time playing an archmage well; how many gamers can accurately roleplay a millennia-old being with godlike power and near-divine enlightenment? It's better, we believe, to roleplay someone still comprehensible to human thought than to assign the whims of mortals to the gods (or vice versa).

Character Points

The elder character's Attributes should start with 10/7/5 rather than 7/5/3. After all, mastery of the Spheres is linked with perfection of mind and body. Similarly, the character receives the standard amount of dots in Abilities (13/9/5), but gains 60 "freebie points" to increase her statistics. The ancient also receives 12 dots in Spheres (above and beyond her starting dot for her Tradition) and 15 dots in Backgrounds. Storytellers may adjust these numbers in either direction if desired, but be warned that giving great power to even well-meaning players can be hazardous to game balance.

Arete starts at the usual level; it may be bought fairly high with "freebie points." Quintessence equals twice the character's Avatar rating; Paradox begins at 3 (assuming a 100-year-old mage), +1 for every 50 years past 100 the character has been alive.

New Merits & Flaws

Below are some new Merits and Flaws tailored for ancient characters. They are *not* for use with normal mages. Note that these can exceed seven points — the span of your existence tends to break the boundaries of normal people. However, be wary — Merits and Flaws of this magnitude can be exceptionally costly in ways not immediately obvious.

Grand Reputation (5 pt Merit)

Word of your deeds has traveled far before you, and many younger students revere your name. You will be welcome at most allied Chantries and can find assistance throughout your Tradition. Of course, you will also be a highly visible presence in the Ascension War, and will attract plenty of unwanted attention.

Years of Wisdom (5 pt Merit)

In your travels, you have seen and done almost everything a person can imagine. Once per game session, you may add one automatic success to any one *non magickal* action, whether it be an attack or dodge, research or persuasion. As you set your mind to the task, you suddenly remember doing something like it before ("When I was at Shiloh...") and draw upon your experience to help you.

Powerful Allies (5-8 pt Merit)

Over the course of the years, you have managed to befriend (or at least establish cordial relations with) a few beings of great power. This may be a sept of Garou, another ancient mage, a vampire prince, Umbrood Preceptor, sidhe duke, elder wraith, mummy or something truly bizarre. Although neither of you would risk life, limb and soul for one another, you're in the habit of lending assistance to one another when required. This Merit can serve as the jumping-off point for many adventures. The Storyteller has final say on what allies you may take, and how much they are worth as a Merit. She also defines the statistics for your ally; although you know the basics, you shouldn't have an omniscient overview of what your friend is capable of.

Pawns (8-15 pt Merit)

You can control a group of people without their even realizing it. These pawns will readily do your bidding, although you must take care to keep your guidance a secret (few people enjoy being manipulated). This Merit cannot be used to take control of any player characters. At 8 points, you have a number of nonmages or recently Awakened pawns. 10 points allows you control of a small cabal, pack of young Garou, or coterie of neonate vampires. 15 points gives you mastery of a band of experienced (though still your lesser) supernatural beings, or one entity close to your own power.

Student's Reputation (2 pt Merit or 2 pt Flaw)

One of your students has made something of a name for herself, and her deeds reflect back on you. Perhaps she is a vibrant young talent who brings a fresh perspective to her Tradition. Alternately, she may be a bad seed who went *barabi* or Marauder some time ago. Whatever the case, her exploits bring you great respect or embarrassment, and her exploits are often the talk of your peers.

Chronic Pain (2 pt Flaw)

Despite your great power, an old wound or perhaps even your age still ails you. You must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 6) every scene or be at a +1 difficulty to all rolls from the painful distraction.

Wistful (2 pt Flaw)

However uncomfortable and hectic your youthful days were, you still miss them. You have a tendency to drift off into daydreams of the "glory days," sometimes acting foolishly or becoming depressed. A Willpower roll will usually put aside your nostalgia — for a while....

Senile (5 pt Flaw)

You're not just absent-minded, your brain is downright deteriorated. You must make a Wits roll or spend a Will-power point to remember just about anything except your name or to attempt any Knowledge roll. You are also susceptible to daydreaming, and may spend days at a time reacting to the world as you remember it 50 years ago. Mages with this Flaw often prove to be a threat to themselves and others around them.

Rivalry (3-5 pt Flaw)

Some mighty being on your own side hates you and seeks to thwart your ambitions. This may be a simple professional rivalry (like those within the halls of Doissetep) or a deep, abiding loathing spawned centuries ago (over lost love, slain friends or worse). Although your rival will not openly attack you, she will do everything in her (considerable) power to make sure you never reach your personal goals — unless they would suit her purposes better than yours....

Immortal Enemy (5-8 pt Flaw)

You have made a supernatural enemy that has been fighting you for years. This may be a vampire, rival mage, Umbrood Lord or something else entirely. Over the decades of your rivalry, this enemy has learned several of your secrets and foibles, and is quite willing to use them against you. The enemy is very well-entrenched in modern society; you have time to thwart his plans and make a few strikes of your own, but going over to visit and kicking his ass is currently very much out of the question.

Sphere Level 6

Oboy.

Truly ancient mages can master powers far beyond the limited Arts Earthbound mages can achieve. Before going into these phenomenal powers further, let's mention three important things:

- **Saying "No.":** A Storyteller is well within her rights to refuse the highest reaches of the Spheres to her players. Allowing them in will — no question *will* — damage anything resembling a normal chronicle. These rules may be considered the domain of Storyteller characters only. They are exceptions to established wisdom, and few beings alive understand them.

- **Lifetimes of learning:** These Arts take generations to perfect; endless research, self-mastery, decades of travel, riddles aplenty — all these things and more are the lot of those who reach for the highest stars. Only a handful of the greatest Masters ever achieve the sixth level in any Sphere, and they guard their secrets jealously. Attaining this rank demands decades, if not centuries, of work.

- **Experience cost:** In game terms, purchasing the sixth rank in a Sphere costs 120 experience points (or freebie points). There is no seventh rank, except perhaps among the Oracles. Studying the secrets between levels 5 and 6 takes *at least* 20 years of game time, and often longer.

That being said, let's examine the greatest powers of the Spheres. Naturally, really huge Effects may still require time and/or extended rolls. Nevertheless, things that would be impossible at lower levels may be achieved with enough successes. Countermagick still works normally against these mighty Arts, and all other rules apply.

Correspondence

To reach across any distance — through any barrier including the Gauntlet or the Horizon — is the gift of ultimate Correspondence mastery. Any connection to a person or place may serve as a “bridge” with which to work one's will. The arch-Master may appear physically in any place he desires, including multiple locations (by adding in Life and Mind) with a thought, or he can send objects hurtling into deep space at lightspeed. The mage who wishes to do so offensively (i.e., teleporting a foe into the sun) must roll at least three successes to succeed. This is, of course, highly vulgar, even if no Sleepers are watching.

Entropy

True mastery of Fate; this rank focuses growth, randomness or decay to such an extent that things which happen gradually at lower levels (deterioration of matter, lifeforms or ideas) occur instantly. With a wave of her hand, the archmage may cause buildings to crumble, people to perish, or mental processes to scramble in a turn or two. Damage caused by this Entropy rank is (successes x 3), which may be aggravated if the magick was vulgar and direct (snapping a person's bones with a snap of your fingers, as opposed to dropping a suddenly rotted statue on top of him). The reverse is also true: A 3-D jigsaw puzzle that has been scattered across a room may be instantly assembled, while a termite-eaten house may be repaired with minimal effort.

Recommended Merits & Flaws

The Book of Shadows has a number of Merits and Flaws that are particularly appropriate for ancient mysticks. For example:

- **Psychological:** Higher Purpose, Overconfident, Obsession, Flashbacks, Driving Goal
- **Mental:** Self-Confident, Iron Will, Absent-Minded
- **Aptitudes:** Jack-Of-All-Trades, Age
- **Supernatural:** Spirit Magnet, Echoes, Cursed, Magical Prohibition or Imperative, Psychic Vampire (a fun one)
- **Sleeper Society:** Virtually all

Forces

Can Porthos really level a mountain? Well, yes, as a matter of fact, he can. Now you know why he's still alive.... Forces 6 allows a mage to create or influence phenomena for miles around. Forces 5 may conjure a hurricane, but Forces 6 can conjure a storm front across a continent. This, of course, demands high dice rolls and advance preparation, but can literally shift tectonic plates or alter weather patterns within minutes.

Life

The power of mass life — or mass death. With Life 6/Mind 5/Prime 2, an arch-Master of Life can create small armies out of thin air, or, with Matter 4, from many smaller objects (like bones or stones). The Perfect Metamorphosis Effect (Life 5) may be used on these new creations, transforming them utterly into whatever the mage wants them to be. If these creatures fall injured, the arch-Master may heal many of them at a time, or slay them *en masse*. In general, one human-sized being per success may be affected. Damage or benefits are figured normally, and all damage is aggravated.

Matter

All matter is interconnected unless some other force interferes. The most advanced Arts show a wizard how to control this connection. With slight effort, the arch-Master of Matter may create, destroy or transform large structures into radically different materials. A castle may be turned to sand, butter or water with enough successes (typically 10 or so).

Additionally, the wizard may extend things he does to one object into another one, so long as both of them touch some inanimate surface close to him — an effect similar to many Correspondence spells, but transferred through vibrations. A bottle broken against the floor may shatter every bottle on a nearby shelf. The range for this latter magick is roughly 50' per success. Damage or benefits are figured normally.

Mind

Are all minds one mind? The arch-Master would argue that they are. By expanding her consciousness into the world-thought, she can sense through many different minds at once, possess several people simultaneously, or perceive the world through a number of different beings — animals, people, insects, even spirits — at the same time. Maintaining control of one's own thought processes requires a Willpower roll at some great difficulty (7 or higher). For a mage with this level of expertise, however, such a roll should be easy. The link may cross between worlds, even beyond the Horizon.

Additionally, an arch-Master may absorb a complex series of learned codes — a language, a mathematical equation, directions to some location, a set of instructions, etc. — in a

turn or two. This requires at least three to five successes to perform (depending on complexity), but leaves the wizard as familiar with the transferred information as if he had learned it himself. New Knowledge Abilities must be purchased in the usual way, or they fade in a week or so; each dot "learned" temporarily requires two successes to acquire.

Prime

The ripples in reality which cause Paradox may be smoothed with the highest Prime Arts. For every success the arch-Master rolls, she subtracts one point of Paradox from whatever source she chooses — a backlash, a Flaw or a Paradox Pool. Paradox spirits may be dispelled with a good roll: each success cancels 5 points of a spirit's Power, dissipating it with raw reality in motion. Each success spent smoothing out Paradox costs the wizard one point of his own Quintessence. As always, the shifting of Prime Force feels like heaven to the mage in question, and often affects those around him the same way.

Spirit

The greatest Masters of Spirit remember how to call the gods. With this Sphere rank, the greatest and most distant spirits — Celestines, Incarna, the nameless things beyond the Horizon, etc. — can be contacted (like **Call Spirit**), channeled (like **Living Bridge**) or even summoned (like a combination of **Call Spirit** and **Break the Dreamshell**). While many of these things are possible at lower levels of expertise, the arch-Master may use them from any side of the Gauntlet and may, to a degree, compel a powerful being to come forth.

With a resisted Willpower roll (difficulty 8), the mage may try to dominate the Umbrood he summons, giving it simple commands (like "Guard this room for one day.") or requesting a simple service ("Take me from New York to Atlanta in one hour."). Gratitude and payments are always good things to have ready when the service is finished; this magick does not last for long.... Simple spirits — like Minions and elementals — demand fewer successes to best (say five to eight) than stronger Umbrood Lords or Banes (eight to 15), Preceptors (15 to 25), or Celestines and Incarnae (25+). Losing such a contest is perilous to say the least, even if you're an arch-Master.

Time

Yes, as one or two arch-Masters can attest, it is possible to travel backward in time. It is deeply vulgar (unless tethered to a conjunctional Mind Effect which allows the person to travel only in dreams), risky and not always reliable. But it is possible at this magickal rank.

Paradox "hangs" while a mage journeys back in time; she can feel the weight of accumulated belief towering over her as she goes about her business. The longer she stays and the more she attempts, the bigger the risk of potential backlash. She may bring other people with her, but each additional person compounds the risk. Another person

might go in her place, but the consequences of his actions will fall on both of them.

For each game hour the wizard (or her companion) spends in past-time, her Paradox Pool doubles. If she attempts some significant action (confronting a person, grabbing an object, stopping a bullet, etc.), the Storyteller rolls her Paradox Pool for a backlash. No botch on the magick roll is necessary. The backlash difficulty depends on the importance of the action: If the character simply grabs the purse she left back at home an hour ago, the difficulty would be 9; if she did something marginally important, like stopping a bus she missed earlier that week, the backlash difficulty drops to 7. If she attempts to change major actions in the recent past, like getting her father to a doctor in time to save his life, the difficulty drops to 6 or 5, and adds three points to her Paradox rating. Major alterations to history, like killing Hitler, drops the difficulty of the roll to 4 or even lower, and doubles the potential backlash, and gives her five points of permanent Paradox. These five dice form the basis of the backlash roll; thus, a mage who started out with no

Paradox at all has five dice rolled against her. Even if she successfully changes the course of history, the mage may well die in the attempt.

Stepping back in time is never coincidental (except, as noted above, if it's done in a dream); the archmage may reduce the "charge" to "vulgar without witnesses" by appearing to be part of the time period (dressing and acting like a Nazi to kill Hitler, for instance) or going where no one can see her (like appearing in her empty apartment). Jumping out of the time stream in full view of others is virtual suicide. The wizard who tries to kill Hitler by leaping out of his closet in '90s clothes will earn an automatic five points of Paradox, plus 26 points of Paradox if her Storyteller rolls a 4 or better.

Now you know why nobody's done it.

Storyteller Note: Jumping back in time really contradicts the atmosphere of the World of Darkness. These strictures have been made with that setting in mind. If you want to run a more freewheeling game, you may drop whatever aspects seem too harsh to you. If you do, however, it's your funeral....

Storytelling for Ancients



Let's face it; centuries-old mysticks are just about as close to demigods as you can get without running an all-Incarna chronicle. These are the sort of people that can do just about anything they set their minds to; the effect gets far worse if your players are clever.

So how do you challenge characters of this caliber? You could threaten them with vampire Methuselahs or Garou elders, but that would be missing the whole point of the game. Yes, bigger guns mean more armored targets; still, combat should hardly be the focus of a campaign of this magnitude.

Chronicles for überpowerful characters should often revolve around intrigue. Even the lowliest acolyte, if crafty enough, can begin a rumor campaign vicious enough to discredit the sagest elder. If your enemy will not reveal her hand, it becomes increasingly difficult to do something about her. Far worse is the situation where you know precisely who your enemy is, but are forbidden to do anything about her (she might be seneschal to your Chantry, or the lover of a good friend). Storytellers should be quick to discourage magickal attempts to solve these situations; using guile is often far more satisfying for the players.

Another approach involves exploring the Umbra. Out here, mysticks can skirt the ever-present gadfly of Paradox. And yet, here also dwell the most powerful beings in *Mage* cosmology. Those mysticks with strong Spirit ratings will find the Sphere a double-edged sword: They wield great power over the denizens of the spirit world, yet those same spirits recognize and resent their power. (Dreamspeakers thus tread carefully and politely among the spirits, in order to avoid accumulating powerful enemies within minutes.) Characters might vie to be elevated

into an Umbral court, gaining rivals and possible allies more in league with their powers. Although a human mage could never rise to become the equal of the mighty Umbrood, imagine playing musketeer to an Incarna! This could also lead to very dangerous adventures against the Nephandi, as the elders decide the only way to demolish a given cult for good is to imprison or destroy its patron.... (For more ideas on Umbral denizens and demons, see *The Book of Madness* and *The Book of Worlds*.)

Those wanting to do something truly different might even craft a chronicle in which one player runs an ancient mystick and the rest remain at the standard *Mage* power level. Obviously, this chronicle is even more difficult to run. You could easily fall into certain pitfalls. Either the younglings run around on Earth while their elder ally stays in a Horizon Realm to avoid Paradox, or the wise one travels with them and handles every potential threat single-handedly. Neither option seems to be much fun.

One way to circumvent this is if the revered elder suffers under a *geas* or three (the Flaw: Magical Prohibition or Imperative, from *The Book of Shadows*). If the old one cannot perform tasks for his younger charges without losing his powers, then he becomes a little more balancing to have along. Such games would be comparable to certain martial-arts flicks; the wizened master travels with the group, but is bound by honor to let them fight their own battles. He is there only to neutralize the advantage held by the archvillain (who usually gets offed by one of the upstart heroes, anyway).

The Umbra could also work as a backdrop for this sort of chronicle. The ancient could be the tour guide and patron for the rest of the cabal, but no rule says the spirits are going to favor the eldest among them. Perhaps the Marquess of Verdant Flame is enchanted by the young Euthanatos' eyes....

Have Fun.

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